

ROBERT BURNS

W. A. NEILSON

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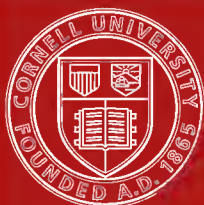
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ROBERT BURNS

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ROBERT BURNS

By

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Essentials of Poetry, etc.

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TO
MY BROTHER

LIST OF POEMS

	PAGE
Address to the Deil	282
Address to the Unco Guid	176
Ae Fond Kiss	56
Afton Water	116
Auld Farmer's New-Year Morning Salutation, The	278
Auld Lang Syne	100
Auld Rob Morris	121
Bannocks o' Barley	165
Bard's Epitaph, A	308
Bessy and Her Spinnin'-Wheel	145
Blue-Eyed Lassie, The	117
Bonnie Lad that's Far Awa, The	139
Bonnie Lesley	118
Braw Braw Lads	140
Ca' the Yowes	115
Charlie He's My Darling	168
Clarinda	58
Come Boat Me o'er to Charlie	163
Comin' through the Rye	154
Contented wi' Little	126
Cotter's Saturday Night, The	8
Death and Doctor Hornbook	287
Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie, The	23
De'il's Awa wi' th' Exciseman, The	154
Deuk's Dang o'er My Daddie, The	155
Duncan Davison	153
Duncan Gray	152
Elegy on Capt. Matthew Henderson	298
Epistle to a Young Friend	200
Epistle to Davie	193
For the Sake o' Somebody	136
Gloomy Night, The	40

LIST OF POEMS—Continued

	PAGE
Go Fetch to Me a Pint o' Wine	88
Green Grow the Rashes	123
Had I the Wyte?	148
Halloween	209
Handsome Nell	20
Highland Balou, The	151
Highland Laddie, The	164
Highland Mary	113
Holy Fair, The	228
Holy Willie's Prayer	173
How Lang and Dreary	138
I Hae a Wife	59
I Hae Been at Crookieden	167
I'm Owre Young to Marry Yet	143
It Was a' for Our Rightfu' King	162
John Anderson, My Jo	146
Jolly Beggars, The	241
Kenmure's On and Awa	165
Lassie wi' the Lint-White Locks	119
Last May a Braw Wooer	135
Lea-Rig, The	120
MacPherson's Farewell	150
Man's a Man for a' that, A	158
Mary Morison	28
Montgomerie's Peggy	120
My Father Was a Farmer	126
My Heart's in the Highlands	140
My Love Is Like a Red Red Rose	102
My Love She's but a Lassie Yet	144
My Nannie O	29
My Nannie's Awa	57
My Wife's a Winsome Wee Thing	108
O for Ane an' Twenty, Tam!	129
O Merry Hae I Been	148
O This Is No My Ain Lassie	107

LIST OF POEMS—Continued

	PAGE
O, Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast	123
Of a' the Airts	106
On a Scotch Bard, Gone to the West Indies	42
On John Dove, Innkeeper	205
Open the Door to Me, O!	137
Poet's Welcome to His Love-Begotten Daughter, The	33
Poor Mailie's Elegy	26
Poortith Cauld	107
Prayer in the Prospect of Death, A	32
Rantin' Dog the Daddie o't, The	134
Rigs o' Barley, The	30
Scotch Drink	301
Scots, Wha Hae	160
Simmer's a Pleasant Time	131
Tam Glen	133
Tam o' Shanter	257
Tam Samson's Elegy	294
There Was a Lad	125
There'll Never Be Peace till Jamie Comes Hame . .	166
To a Haggis	306
To a Louse	274
To a Mountain Daisy	276
To a Mouse	272
To Dauntion Me	142
To Mary in Heaven	114
To the Rev. John McMath	181
Twa Dogs, The	219
Wandering Willie	138
Weary Pund o' Tow, The	147
Wha Is that at My Bower Door?	156
What Can a Young Lassie	142
Whistle, and I'll Come to Ye, My Lad	132
Will Ye Go to the Indies, My Mary?	40
Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Mant	238
Willie's Wife	156
Ye Banks and Braes (two versions)	130
Yestreen I Had a Pint o' Wine	104

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I BIOGRAPHY	1
1. Alloway, Mount Oliphant, and Lochlea	3
2. Mossiel	31
3. Edinburgh	44
4. Ellisland	58
5. Dumfries	62
II INHERITANCE: LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE	69
III BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG	90
IV SATIRES AND EPISTLES	171
V DESCRIPTIVE AND NARRATIVE POETRY	206
VI CONCLUSION	310
INDEX	325

ROBERT BURNS

BURNS

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY

“**I** HAVE not the most distant pretence to what the pye-coated guardians of Escutcheons call a Gentleman. When at Edinburgh last winter, I got acquainted at the Herald’s office; and looking thro’ the granary of honors, I there found almost every name in the kingdom; but for me,

My ancient but ignoble blood
Has crept thro’ scoundrels since the flood.

Gules, purpure, argent, etc., quite disowned me. My forefathers rented land of the famous, noble Keiths of Marshal, and had the honor to share their fate. I do not use the word ‘honor’ with any reference to political principles: *loyal* and *dis-loyal* I take to be merely relative terms in that ancient and formidable court known in this country by the name of ‘club-law.’ Those who dare welcome Ruin and shake hands with Infamy, for

what they believe sincerely to be the cause of their God or their King, are—as Mark Antony in *Shakspear* says of Brutus and Cassius—‘honorable men.’ I mention this circumstance because it threw my Father on the world at large; where, after many years’ wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my pretensions to Wisdom. I have met with few who understood Men, their manners and their ways, equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly Integrity, and headlong, ungovernable Irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently, I was born a very poor man’s son.”

“You can now, Sir, form a pretty near guess of what sort of Wight he is, whom for some time you have honored with your correspondence. That Whim and Fancy, keen sensibility and riotous passions, may still make him zig-zag in his future path of life is very probable; but, come what will, I shall answer for him—the most determinate integrity and honor [shall ever characterise him]; and though his evil star should again blaze in his meridian with tenfold more direful influence, he may reluctantly tax friendship with pity, but no more.”

These two paragraphs form respectively the beginning and the end of a long autobiographical letter written by Robert Burns to Doctor John Moore, physician and novelist. At the time they were composed, the poet had just returned to his native county after the triumphant season in Edinburgh that formed the climax of his career. But no detailed knowledge of circumstances is necessary to rouse interest in a man who wrote like that. You may be offended by the self-consciousness and the swagger, or you may be charmed by the frankness and dash, but you can not remain indifferent. Burns had many moods besides those reflected in these sentences, but here we can see as vividly as in any of his poetry the fundamental characteristics of the man—sensitive, passionate, independent, and as proud as Lucifer—whose life and work are the subject of this volume.

1. Alloway, Mount Oliphant, and Lochlea

William Burnes, the father of the poet, came of a family of farmers and gardeners in the county of Kincardine, on the east coast of Scotland. At the age of twenty-seven, he left his native district for the south; and when Robert,

his eldest child, was born on January 25, 1759, William was employed as gardener to the provost of Ayr. He had besides leased some seven acres of land, of which he planned to make a nursery and market-garden, in the neighboring parish of Alloway; and there near the Brig o' Doon built with his own hands the clay cottage now known to literary pilgrims as the birthplace of Burns. His wife, Agnes Brown, the daughter of an Ayrshire farmer, bore him, besides Robert, three sons and three daughters. In order to keep his sons at home instead of sending them out as farm-laborers, the elder Burnes rented in 1766 the farm of Mount Oliphant, and stocked it on borrowed money. The venture did not prosper, and on a change of landlords the family fell into the hands of a merciless agent, whose bullying the poet later avenged by the portrait of the factor in *The Twa Dogs*.

I've noticed, on our Laird's court-day,—
And mony a time my heart's been wae,—
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,
How they maun thole a factor's snash;
He'll stamp and threaten, curse and swear,
He'll apprehend them, poind their gear;
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,
And hear it a', and fear and tremble!

In 1777 Mount Oliphant was exchanged for the farm of Lochlea, about ten miles away, and here William Burnes labored for the rest of his life. The farm was poor, and with all he could do it was hard to keep his head above water. His health was failing, he was harassed with debts, and in 1784 in the midst of a lawsuit about his lease, he died.

In spite of his struggle for a bare subsistence, the elder Burnes had not neglected the education of his children. Before he was six, Robert was sent to a small school at Alloway Mill, and soon after his father joined with a few neighbors to engage a young man named John Murdoch to teach their children in a room in the village. This arrangement continued for two years and a half, when, Murdoch having been called elsewhere, the father undertook the task of education himself. The regular instruction was confined chiefly to the long winter evenings, but quite as important as this was the intercourse between father and sons as they went about their work.

"My father," says the poet's brother Gilbert, "was for some time almost the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects

with us, as if we had been men; and was at great pains, as we accompanied him in the labours of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge, or confirm our virtuous habits. He borrowed Salmon's *Geographical Grammar* for us, and endeavoured to make us acquainted with the situation and history of the different countries in the world; while, from a book-society in Ayr, he procured for us Derham's *Physics and Astro-Theology*, and Ray's *Wisdom of God in the Creation*, to give us some idea of astronomy and natural history. Robert read all these books with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled. My father had been a subscriber to Stackhouse's *History of the Bible* . . . ; from this Robert collected a competent knowledge of ancient history; for no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to dampen his researches. A brother of my mother, who had lived with us some time, and had learned some arithmetic by our winter evening's candle, went into a bookseller's shop in Ayr to purchase the *Ready Reckoner, or Tradesman's Sure Guide*, and a book to teach him to write letters. Luckily, in place of the *Complete Letter-Writer*, he got by mistake a

small collection of letters by the most eminent writers, with a few sensible directions for attaining an easy epistolary style. This book was to Robert of the greatest consequence. It inspired him with a strong desire to excel in letter-writing, while it furnished him with models by some of the first writers in our language."

Interesting as are the details as to the antiquated manuals from which Burns gathered his general information, it is more important to note the more personal implications in this account. Respect for learning has long been wide-spread among the peasantry of Scotland, but it is evident that William Burnes was intellectually far above the average of his class. The schoolmaster Murdoch has left a portrait of him in which he not only extols his virtues as a man but emphasizes his zest for things of the mind, and states that "he spoke the English language with more propriety—both with respect to diction and pronunciation—than any man I ever knew, with no greater advantages." Though tender and affectionate, he seems to have inspired both wife and children with a reverence amounting to awe, and he struck strangers as reserved and austere. He recog-

nized in Robert traces of extraordinary gifts, but he did not hide from him the fact that his son's temperament gave him anxiety for his future. Mrs. Burnes was a devoted wife and mother, by no means her husband's intellectual equal, but vivacious and quick-tempered, with a memory stored with the song and legend of the countryside. Other details can be filled in from the poet's own picture of his father's household as given with little or no idealization in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*.

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

My lov'd, my honour'd, much respected friend!
 No mercenary bard his homage pays:
 With honest pride I scorn each selfish end,
 My dearest meed a friend's esteem and praise:
 To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
 The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
 The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
 What Aiken in a cottage would have been—
 Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween.

wail

November chill blows loud wi' angry sough;
 The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
 The miry beasts retreating frae the plough;
 The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:
 The toil-worn Cotter frae his labour goes,

This night his weekly moil is at an end,
 Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
 Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
 And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
 Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
 Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin', stacher through stagger
 To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise an' glee. fluttering
 His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonnilie, fire
 His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
 The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
 Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile, worry
 An' makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in, Soon
 At service out, amang the farmers roun';
 Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin drive, heedful run . . .
 A cannie errand to a neibor town: quiet
 Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,
 In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in he e'e, eye
 Comes hame, perhaps to shew a braw new gown, fine
 Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee, hard-won wages
 To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeign'd brothers and sisters meet,
 An' each for other's weelfare kindly spiers: asks
 The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnoticed fleet;
 Each tells the uncoss that he sees or hears; wonders
 The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;

Anticipation forward points the view.

Makes old clothes The mother, wi' her needle an' her sheers,
Gars auld claes look amaisht as weel 's the new;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

youngsters Their master's an' their mistress's command
diligent The youngers a' are warnèd to obey;
trifle An' mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
 An' ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:
 'And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
go An' mind your duty, duly, morn an' night!
 Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
 Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!

knows But hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
 Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
 Tells how a neibor lad cam o'er the moor,
 To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
 The wily mother sees the conscious flame
 Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;
balf Wi' heart-struck anxious care, inquires his name,
 While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel pleased the mother hears it's nae wild worthless rake

in Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
 A strappin' youth; he takes the mother's eye;
 Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;
chats, cows The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
 The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,

But blate and laithfu', scarce can weel behave;	shy, bashful
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy	
What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae grave;	
Weel-pleased to think her bairn's respected like the lave.	child, rest

O happy love! where love like this is found;
 O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
 I've paced much this weary mortal round,
 And sage experience bids me this declare:—
 'If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
 One cordial in this melancholy vale,
 'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair
 In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
 Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale.'

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—
 A wretch, a villain, lost to love and truth—
 That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
 Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
 Curse on his perjur'd arts, dissembling, smooth!
 Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
 Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
 Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
 Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,	
The halesome parritch, chief of Scotia's food:	wholesome
The sowpe their only hawkie does afford,	milk, cow
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood;	beyond, parti
The dame brings forth in complimental mood,	tion, cud

well-saved cheese,
strong

To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell;
And aft he's prest, and aft he ca's it good;
The frugal wife, garrulous, will tell

twelve-month,
flax, flower

How 'twas a towmond auld sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face
They round the ingle form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-bible, ance his father's pride:

family-Bible

His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,

gray hair on tem-
ples

His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;

Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide—

chooses

He wales a portion with judicious care,

And 'Let us worship God!' he says with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps Dundee's wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name;
Or noble Elgin beets the heav'nward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:

fans

Compared with these, Italian trills are tame;

The tickled ears no heartfelt raptures raise;

No, have

Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie

Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He who bore in Heaven the second name
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head;
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by Heaven's
command.

Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing'
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's every grace, except the heart!
The Power, incensed, the pageant will desert,

The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole ;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul ;
And in His Book of Life the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their several way ;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest :
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heav'n the warm request,
That He who stills the raven's clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide ;
But chiefly in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad :
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
'An honest man's the noblest work of God ;'
And certes, in fair Virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind ;
What is a lordling's pomp ? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd !

O Scotia ! my dear, my native soil !
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent !
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content !
And O may Heaven their simple lives prevent

From luxury's contagion, weak and vile;
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.

O Thou! who poured the patriotic tide
That streamed thro' Wallace's undaunted heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die—the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert;
But still the patriot, and the patriot-bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

No less impressive than that of his father is the intellectual hunger of the future poet himself. We have had Gilbert's testimony to the eagerness with which he devoured such books as came within his reach, and the use he made of his later fragments of schooling points the same way. He had a quarter at the parish school of Dalrymple when he was thirteen; and in the following summer he attended the school at Ayr under his former Alloway instructor. Murdoch's own account of these three weeks gives an idea of Burns's quickness of apprehension; and the style of it is worth noting with reference to the characteristics of the poet's own prose.

"In 1773," says Murdoch, "Robert Burns came to board and lodge with me, for the purpose of revising English grammar, etc., that he might be better qualified to instruct his brothers and sisters at home. He was now with me day and night, in school, at all meals, and in all my walks. At the end of one week, I told him as he was now pretty much master of the parts of speech, etc., I should like to teach him something of French pronunciation, that when he should meet with the name of a French town, ship, officer, or the like, in the newspapers, he might be able to pronounce it something like a French word. Robert was glad to hear this proposal, and immediately we attacked the French with great courage.

"Now there was little else to be heard but the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, etc. When walking together, and even at meals, I was constantly telling him the names of different objects, as they presented themselves, in French; so that he was hourly laying in a stock of words, and sometimes little phrases. In short, he took such pleasure in learning, and I in teaching, that it was difficult to say which of the two was most zealous in the business; and about the end of the second week of our study of the

French, we began to read a little of the *Adventures of Telemachus* in Fénelon's own words.

"But now the plains of Mount Oliphant began to whiten, and Robert was summoned to relinquish the pleasing scenes that surrounded the grotto of Calypso, and armed with a sickle, to seek glory by signalling himself in the fields of Ceres; and so he did, for although but about fifteen, I was told that he performed the work of a man."

The record of Burns's school-days is completed by the mention of a sojourn, probably in the summer of 1775, in his mother's parish of Kirkoswald. Hither he went to study mathematics and surveying under a teacher of local note, and, in spite of the convivial attractions of a smuggling village, seems to have made progress in his geometry till his head was turned by a girl who lived next door to the school.

So far the education gained by Burns from his schoolmasters and his father had been almost exclusively moral and intellectual. It was in less formal ways that his imagination was fed. From his mother he had heard from infancy the ballads, legends, and songs that were traditionary among

the peasantry; and the influence of these was re-enforced by a certain Betty Davidson, an unfortunate relative of his mother's to whom the family gave shelter for a time.

"In my infant and boyish days, too," he writes in the letter to Doctor Moore already quoted, "I owed much to an old maid of my mother's, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country, of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, enchanted towers, giants, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of Poesy; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more sceptical in these matters than I, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors."

His private reading also contained much that must have stimulated his imagination and broadened his interests. It began with a *Life of Han-*

nibal, and Hamilton's modernized version of the *History of Sir William Wallace*, which last, he says, with the touch of flamboyancy that often recurs in his style, "poured a Scottish prejudice in my veins, which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest." By the time he was eighteen he had, in addition to books already mentioned, become acquainted with Shakespeare, Pope (including the translation of Homer), Thomson, Shenstone, Allan Ramsay, and a *Select Collection of Songs, Scotch and English*; with the *Spectator*, the *Pantheon*, Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, Sterne, and Henry Mackenzie. To these must be added some books on farming and gardening, a good deal of theology, and, of course, the Bible.

The pursuing of intellectual interests such as are implied in this list is the more significant when we remember that it was carried on in the scanty leisure of a life of labor so severe that it all but broke the poet's health, and probably left permanent marks on his physique. Yet he had energy left for still other avocations. It was when he was no more than fifteen that he first experienced the twin passions that came to dominate his life, love and song. The girl who was

the occasion was his partner in the harvest field,
Nelly Kilpatrick; the song he addressed to her is
the following:

HANDSOME NELL

O, once I lov'd a bonnie lass,
Aye, and I love her still,
And whilst that virtue warms my breast
I'll love my handsome Nell.

As bonnie lasses I hae seen,
And mony full as braw,
But for a modest gracefu' mien
The like I never saw.

A bonnie lass, I will confess,
Is pleasant to the e'e,
But without some better qualities
She's no a lass for me.

But Nelly's looks are blithe and sweet,
And what is best of a',
Her reputation is complete,
And fair without a flaw.

She dresses aye sae clean and neat,
Both decent and genteel;
And then there's something in her gait
Gars ony dress look weel.

A gaudy dress and gentle air
May slightly touch the heart,
But it's innocence and modesty
That polishes the dart.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
'Tis this enchants my soul!
For absolutely in my breast
She reigns without control.

Since there may still be readers who suppose that Burns was a mere unsophisticated singer, without power of self-criticism, it may be as well to insert here a passage from a *Commonplace Book* written in 1783, ten years after the composition of the song.

Criticism on the Foregoing Song

“Lest my works should be thought below Criticism; or meet with a Critic who, perhaps, will not look on them with so candid and favorable an eye; I am determined to criticise them myself.

“The first distich of the first stanza is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street ballads; and on the other hand, the second distich is too much in the other extreme. The expression is a little awkward, and the sentiment too serious. Stanza the second I am well pleased with; and I think it conveys a fine idea of that amiable part of the Sex—the agreeables, or what in our Scotch dialect we call a sweet sonsy Lass. The third Stanza has a little of the flimsy turn in it; and the

third line has rather too serious a cast. The fourth Stanza is a very indifferent one; the first line is, indeed, all in the strain of the second Stanza, but the rest is mostly an expletive. The thoughts in the fifth Stanza come fairly up to my favorite idea [of] a sweet sonsy Lass. The last line, however, halts a little. The same sentiments are kept up with equal spirit and tenderness in the sixth Stanza, but the second and fourth lines ending with short syllables hurts the whole. The seventh Stanza has several minute faults; but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, and my blood sallies at the remembrance."

In spite of the early start in poetry given him by Nelly Kilpatrick, he did not produce more than a few pieces of permanent value during the next ten years. He did, however, go on developing and branching out in his social activities, in spite of the depressing grind of the farm. He attended a dancing school (much against his father's will), helped to establish a "Bachelors' Club" for debating, and found time for further love-affairs. That with Ellison Begbie, celebrated by him in

The Lass of Cessnock Banks, he took very seriously, and he proposed marriage to the girl in some portentously solemn epistles which remain to us as the earliest examples of his prose. In order to put himself in a position to marry, he determined to learn the trade of flax-dressing; and though Ellison refused him, he went to the neighboring seaport of Irvine to carry out his purpose in the summer of 1781. The flax-dressing experiment ended disastrously with a fire which burned the workshop, and Burns returned penniless to the farm. The poems written about this time express profound melancholy, a mood natural enough in the circumstances, and aggravated by his poor nervous and physical condition.

But his spirit could not remain permanently depressed, and shortly after his return to Lochlea, a trifling accident to a ewe he had bought prompted him to the following delightful and characteristic production.

THE DEATH AND DYING WORDS OF POOR
MAILIE, THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE

As Mailie, an' her lambs thegither,
Was ae day nibbling on the tether,
Upon her cloot she coost a hitch,
An' owre she warsled in the ditch;

together
one
hoof, looped
over, floundered

doddering

staring

There, groaning, dying, she did lie,
When Hughoc he cam doytin by.

Wi glowrin' een, an' lifted han's,
Poor Hughoc like a statue stan's;
He saw her days were near-hand ended,
But wae's my heart! he could na mend it!
He gapèd wide, but naething spak;
At length poor Mailie silence brak:—

own

much money

drive

wool

give

foxes

look after

tend

bunches, handfuls

'O thou, whase lamentable face
Appears to mourn my woefu' case!
My dying words attentive hear,
An' bear them to my Master dear.

'Tell him, if e'er again he keep
As muckle gear as buy a sheep,—
O bid him never tie them mair
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair!
But ca' them out to park or hill,
An' let them wander at their will;
So may his flock increase, an' grow
To scores o' lambs, an' packs o' woo'!

'Tell him he was a Master kin',
An' aye was guid to me an' mine;
An' now my dying charge I gie him,
My helpless lambs, I trust them wi' him.

'O bid him save their harmless lives
Frae dogs, an' tods, an' butchers' knives!
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel:
An' tent them duly, e'en an' morn,
Wi' teats o' hay an' rippis o' corn.

'An' may they never learn the gates
 Of ither vile wanrestfu' pets—
 To slink thro' slaps, an' reave an' steal,
 At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail.
 So may they, like their great forbears,
 For mony a year come thro' the shears;
 So wives will gie them bits o' bread,
 An' bairns greet for them when they're dead.

ways
 restless
 holes in fences
 plants

'My poor tup-lamb, my son an' heir,
 O bid him breed him up wi' care!
 An', if he live to be a beast,
 To pit some havins in his breast!
 An' warn him, what I winna name,
 To stay content wi' yowes at hame;
 An' no to rin an' wear his cloots,
 Like ither menseless graceless brutes.

weep

'An neist my yowie, silly thing,
 Gude keep thee frae a tether string!
 O may thou ne'er forgather up
 Wi' ony blastit moorland tup;
 But ay keep mind to moop an' mell,
 Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel!

put, behavior
 will not
 ewes
 hoofs
 unmannerly
 next

'And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath
 I lea'e my blessin' wi' you baith;
 An' when you think upo' your mither,
 Mind to be kind to ane anither.

make friends
 nibble, meddle

'Now, honest Hughoc, dinna fail
 To tell my master a' my tale;
 An' bid him burn this cursed tether;
 An', for thy pains, thou'se get my blether.'

bladder

This said, poor Mailie turn'd her head,
 An' closed her een amang the dead!

eyes

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY

	Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,
salt	Wi' saut tears tricklin' down your nose,
	Our bardie's fate is at a close,
remedy	Past a' remead;
cope-stone	The last sad cape-stane of his woes—
	Poor Mailie's dead!

worldly lucre	It's no the loss o' warl's gear
	That could sae bitter draw the tear,
downcast	Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear
	The mourning weed:
	He's lost a friend and neibor dear
	In Mailie dead.

Thro' a' the toun she trotted by him ;
A lang half-mile she could descry him ;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed :
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him
Than Mailie dead.

wot	I wat she was a sheep o' sense,
manners	An' could behave hersel wi' mense; I'll say't, she never brak a fence Thro' thievish greed.
parlor	Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence
Since	Sin' Mailie's dead.

Or, if he wanders up the howe,	glen
Her living image in her yowe	ewe-lamb
Comes bleating to him, owre the knowe,	knoll
For bits o' bread,	
An' down the briny pearls rowe	roll
For Mailie dead.	

She was nae get o' moorland tups,	issue
Wi' tawted ket, an' hairy hips;	matted fleece
For her forbears were brought in ships	
Frae 'yont the Tweed;	
A bonnier fleesh ne'er cross'd the clips	fleece, shears
Than Mailie's, dead.	

Wae worth the man wha first did shape	Woe to
That vile wanchancie thing—a rape!	dangerous
It maks guid fellows girn an' gape,	growl
Wi' chokin' dread;	
An' Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape	
For Mailie dead.	

O a' ye bards on bonnie Doon!	
An' wha on Ayr your chanter's tune!	bagpipes
Come, join the melancholious croon	
O' Robin's reed;	
His heart will never get aboon!	rejoice
His Mailie's dead!	

How long he continued to mourn for Ellison Begbie, it is hard to say; but the three following songs, inspired, it would seem, by three different girls, testify at once to his power of recuperation

and the rapid maturing of his talent. All seem to have been written between the date of his return from Irvine and the death of his father.

MARY MORISON

bear, struggle	O Mary, at thy window be, It is the wish'd, the trysted hour ! Those smiles and glances let me see, That make the miser's treasure poor : How blythely wad I bide the stoure, A weary slave frae sun to sun, Could I the rich reward secure, The lovely Mary Morison.
Last night went	Yestreen, when to the trembling string The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha', To thee my fancy took its wing, I sat, but neither heard nor saw : Tho' this was fair, and that was braw, And yon the toast of a' the town, I sigh'd, and said amang them a', 'Ye are na Mary Morison.'
fine the other	O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace, Wha for thy sake wad gladly die? Or canst thou break that heart of his, Whase only faut is loving thee? If love for love thou wilt na gie, At least be pity to me shown ! A thought ungentle canna be The thought o' Mary Morison.
fault	

MY NANNIE O

Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,
 'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,
 And I'll awa' to Nannie, O.

The westlin wind blows loud an' shill,
 The night's baith mirk and rainy, O;
But I'll get my plaid, an' out I'll steal,
 An' owre the hill to Nannie, O.

western, keen
both dark

over

My Nannie's charming, sweet, an' young:
 Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O:
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
 That wad beguile my Nannie, O.

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
 As spotless as she's bonnie, O:
The opening gowan, wat wi' dew,
 Nae purer is than Nannie, O.

daisy, wet

A country lad is my degree,
 An' few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be,
 I'm welcome aye to Nannie, O.

My riches a's my penny-fee,
 An' I maun guide it cannie, O;
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me,
 My thoughts are a'—my Nannie, O.

wages
carefully
lucre

cows
holds

Our auld guidman delights to view
His sheep an' kye thrive bonnie, O.
But I'm as blythe that hauds his pleugh,
An' has nae care but Nannie, O.

reck not

Come weel, come woe, I care na by,
I'll tak what Heav'n will send me, O
Nae ither care in life have I,
But live, an' love my Nannie, O.

THE RIGS O' BARLEY

ridges

took my way
careless

It was upon a Lammas night,
When corn rigs are bonnie,
Beneath the moon's unclouded light
I held awa to Annie:
The time flew by wi' tentless heed,
Till, 'tween the late and early,
Wi' sma' persuasion she agreed
To see me thro' the barley.

knew, own

over

The sky was blue, the wind was still,
The moon was shining clearly;
I set her down wi' right good will
Amang the rigs o' barley;
I kent her heart was a' my ain;
I loved her most sincerely;
I kissed her owre and owre again
Amang the rigs o' barley.

I locked her in my fond embrace;
Her heart was beating rarely;
My blessings on that happy place,
Amang the rigs o' barley!
But by the moon and stars so bright,
That shone that hour so clearly,
She aye shall bless that happy night
Amang the rigs o' barley.

I hae been blythe wi' comrades dear;
I hae been merry drinking;
I hae been joyfu' gatherin' gear;
I hae been happy thinking:
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Tho' three times doubled fairly,
That happy night was worth them a',
Amang the rigs o' barley.

property

Corn rigs, an' barley rigs,
An' corn rigs are bonnie:
I'll ne'er forget that happy night,
Amang the rigs wi' Annie.

2. *Mossgiel*

On the death of their father, Robert and Gilbert Burns moved with the family to the farm of Mossgiel in the next parish of Mauchline. By putting in a claim for arrears of wages, they succeeded in drawing enough from the wreck of

their father's estate to supply a scanty stock for the new venture. The records of the first summer show the poet in anything but a happy frame of mind. His health was miserable; and the loosening of his moral principles, which he ascribes to the influence of a young sailor he had met at Irvine, bore fruit in the birth to him of an illegitimate daughter by a servant girl, Elizabeth Paton. The verses which carry allusion to this affair are illuminating for his character. One group is devout and repentant; the other marked sometimes by cynical bravado, sometimes by a note of exultation. Both may be regarded as genuine enough expressions of moods which alternated throughout his life, and which corresponded to conflicting sides of his nature. Here is a typical example of the former:

A PRAYER IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH

O Thou unknown Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence ere an hour,
Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wander'd in those paths
Of life I ought to shun;
As something, loudly in my breast,
Remonstrates I have done;

Thou know'st that Thou hast formèd me
 With passions wild and strong;
 And list'ning to their witching voice
 Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,
 Or frailty stept aside,
 Do thou, All-Good! for such Thou art,
 In shades of darkness hide.

Where with intention I have err'd,
 No other plea I have,
 But thou art good; and Goodness still
 Delighteth to forgive.

In his *Epistle to John Rankine*, with a somewhat hard and heartless humor, he braves out the affair; in the following *Welcome* he treats it with a tender pride, as sincere as his remorse:

THE POET'S WELCOME TO HIS LOVE- BEGOTTEN DAUGHTER

Thou's welcome, wean! Mishanter fa' me,
 If ought of thee, or of thy mammy,
 Shall ever daunt me, or awe me,
 My sweet wee lady,
 Or if I blush when thou shalt ca' me
 Tit-ta or daddy.

child! Misfor=
 tune befall

country gossip
more
tattle
feeble
give one annoy-
ance

What tho' they ca' me fornicator,
An' tease my name in kintra clatter :
The mair they talk I'm kent the better,
E'en let them clash ;
An auld wife's tongue's a feckless matter
To gie ane fash.

choir

Welcome, my bonnie, sweet wee dochter—
Tho' ye come here a wee unsought for,
An' tho' your comin' I hae fought for
Baith kirk an' queir ;
Yet, by my faith, ye're no unwrought for !
That I shall swear !

not all lost
askew

Sweet fruit o' mony a merry dint,
My funny toil is no a' tint,
Tho' thou came to the warl' asklent,
Which fools may scoff at ;
In my last plack thy part's be in't—
The better half o't.

worse off
finely, comfortably

Tho' I should be the waur bested,
Thou's be as braw an' bienly clad,
An' thy young years as nicely bred
Wi' education,
As ony brat o' wedlock's bed
In a' thy station.

pet

Wee image of my bonnie Betty,
As fatherly I kiss and daut thee,
As dear an' near my heart I set thee
Wi' as guid will,
As a' the priests had seen me get thee
That's out o' hell.

Gude grant that thou may aye inherit	God
Thy mither's looks and gracefu' merit,	
An' thy poor worthless daddy's spirit,	
Without his failins ;	
'Twill please me mair to see thee heir it,	
Than stockit mailins.	farms
 An' if thou be what I wad hae thee,	would have
An' tak the counsel I shall gie thee,	
I'll never rue my trouble wi' thee—	
The cost nor shame o't—	
But be a loving father to thee,	
And brag the name o't.	

At Mossgiel the Burns family was no more successful than in either of its previous farms. Bad seed and bad weather gave two poor harvests, and by the summer of 1786 the poet's financial condition was again approaching desperation. His situation was made still more embarrassing by the consequences of another of his amours. Shortly after moving to the parish of Mauchline he had fallen in love with Jean Armour, the daughter of a mason in the village. What was for Burns a prolonged courtship ensued, and in the spring of 1786 he learned that Jean's condition was such that he gave her a paper acknowledging her as his wife. To his surprise and mortification the girl's father, who is

said to have had a personal dislike to him and who well may have thought a man with his reputation and prospects was no promising son-in-law, opposed the marriage, forced Jean to give up the paper, and sent her off to another town. Burns chose to regard Jean's submission to her father as inexcusable faithlessness, and proceeded to indulge in the ecstatic misery of the lover betrayed. There is no doubt that he suffered keenly from the affair: he writes to his friends that he could "have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment" than what he had felt in his "own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her: I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riot . . . to drive her out of my head, but all in vain." This is in a later letter than that in which he has "sunk into a lurid calm," and "subsided into the time-settled sorrow of the sable widower."

Yet other evidence shows that at this crisis also Burns's emotional experience was far from simple. It was probably during the summer of the same year that there occurred the passages with the mysterious Highland Mary, a girl whose identity, after voluminous controversy, remains vague, but who inspired some of his loftiest love

poetry. Though Burns's feeling for her seems to have been a kind of interlude in reaction from the "cruelty" of Jean, he idealized it beyond his wont, and the subject of it has been exalted to the place among his heroines which is surely due to the long-suffering woman who became his wife.

In this same summer Burns formed the project of emigrating. He proposed to go to the West Indies, and return for Jean when he had made provision to support her. This offer was refused by James Armour, but Burns persevered with the plan, obtained a position in Jamaica, and in the autumn engaged passage in a ship sailing from Greenock. The song, *Will Ye Go to the Indies, My Mary*, seems to imply that Highland Mary was invited to accompany him, but substantial evidence of this, as of most things concerning his relations with Mary Campbell, is lacking. *From Thee, Eliza, I Must Go*, supposed to be addressed to Elizabeth Miller, also belongs to this summer, and is taken to refer to another of the "underplots in his drama of love."

Meantime, at the suggestion of his friend and patron, Gavin Hamilton, Burns had begun to arrange for a subscription edition of his poems. It seems to have been only after he went to Mossgiel

that he had seriously conceived the idea of writing for publication, and the decision was followed by a year of the most extraordinary fertility in composition. To 1785-1786 are assigned such satires as *Holy Willie* and the *Address to the Unco Guid*; a group of the longer poems including *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, *The Jolly Beggars*, *Halloween*, *The Holy Fair*, *The Twa Dogs* and *The Vision*; some shorter but no less famous pieces, such as the poems *To a Louse*, *To a Mouse*, *To the Deil*, *To a Mountain Daisy* and *Scotch Drink*; and a number of the best of his *Epistles*. Many of these, especially the church satires, had obtained a considerable local fame through circulation in manuscript, so that, proposals having been issued for an edition to be printed by Wilson of Kilmarnock, it was not found difficult to obtain subscriptions for more than half the edition of six hundred and twelve copies. The prospect of some return from this enterprise induced James Armour to take legal measures to obtain support for Jean's expected child, and Burns, fearing imprisonment, was forced to go into hiding while his book was passing the press. The church, too, had taken cognizance of his offense, and both Jean and he had

to stand up before the congregation on three occasions to receive rebuke and make profession of repentance. He was at the same time completing the preparations for his voyage. In such extraordinary circumstances appeared the famous Kilmarnock edition, the immediate success of which soon produced a complete alteration in the whole outlook of the poet.

In the first place, the consideration Burns gained from his volume induced Armour to relax his pursuit, and in September, when Jean became the mother of twins, the poet was in such a mood that the sentiment of paternity began to weigh against the proposed emigration. Some weeks later he learned through a friend that Doctor Blacklock, a poet and scholar of standing in literary circles in Edinburgh, had praised his volume highly, and urged a second and larger edition. The upshot was that he gave up his passage (his trunk had been packed and was part way to Greenock), and determined instead on a visit to Edinburgh. The only permanent result of the whole West Indian scheme was thus a sheaf of amorous and patriotic farewells, of which the following may be taken as examples :

WILL YE GO TO THE INDIES, MY MARY?

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
Across the Atlantic's roar?

O sweet grows the lime and the orange,
And the apple on the pine;
But a' the charms o' the Indies
Can never equal thine.

I hae sworn by the Heavens to my Mary,
I hae sworn by the Heavens to be true;
And sae may the Heavens forget me,
When I forget my vow!

O plight me your faith, my Mary,
And plight me your lily-white hand;
O plight me your faith, my Mary,
Before I leave Scotia's strand.

We hae plighted our troth, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join;
And curst be the cause that shall part us!
The hour, and the moment o' time!

THE GLOOMY NIGHT

The gloomy night is gathering fast,
Loud roars the wild inconstant blast,
Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain;

The hunter now has left the moor,
The scatter'd coveys meet secure,
While here I wander, prest with care,
Along the lonely banks of Ayr.

The Autumn mourns her ripening corn
By early Winter's ravage torn ;
Across her placid azure sky,
She sees the scowling tempest fly :
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave,
I think upon the stormy wave,
Where many a danger I must dare,
Far from the bonnie banks of Ayr.

'Tis not the surging billow's roar,
'Tis not that fatal, deadly shore ;
Tho' death in ev'ry shape appear,
The wretched have no more to fear :
But round my heart the ties are bound,
That heart transpierc'd with many a wound :
These bleed afresh, those ties I tear,
To leave the bonnie banks of Ayr.

Farewell, old Coila's hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales ;
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past unhappy loves !
Farewell, my friends ! Farewell, my foes !
My peace with these, my love with those ;
The bursting tears my heart declare,
Farewell, my bonnie banks of Ayr !

ON A SCOTCH BARD, GONE TO THE
WEST INDIES

sups
rhyme

A' ye wha live by sowps o' drink,
A' ye wha live by crambo-clink,
A' ye wha live an' never think,
Come mourn wi' me!
Our billie's gi'en us a' a jink,
An' owre the sea.

jovial set
frolic

Lament him, a' ye rantin core,
Wha dearly like a random-splore;
Nae mair he'll join the merry roar,
In social key;
For now he's taen anither shore,
An' owre the sea!

wish for

The bonnie lasses weel may wiss him,
And in their dear petitions place him,
The widows, wives, an' a' may bless him
Wi' tearfu' e'e;

wot, sorely

For weel I wat they'll sairly miss him
That's owre the sea!

drone
fuss
grievance
lively, auger

O Fortune, they hae room to grumble!
Hadst thou taen aff some drowsy bummle
Wha can do nought but fyke an' fumble,
'Twad been nae plea;
But he was gleg as ony wumble,
That's owre the sea!

Auld cantie Kyle may weepers wear,
 An' stain them wi' the saut, saut tear :
 'Twill mak her poor auld heart, I fear,
 In flinders flee ;
 He was her Laureat mony a year,
 That's owre the sea !

cheerful, mourn-
 ing bands
 salt

fragments

He saw misfortune's cauld nor-west
 Lang mustering up a bitter blast ;
 A jillet brak his heart at last—
 Ill may she be !
 So took a berth afore the mast,
 An' owre the sea.

jilt

To tremble under Fortune's cummock
 On scarce a bellyfu' o' drummock,
 Wi' his proud independent stomach,
 Could ill agree ;
 So row't his hurdies in a hammock,
 An' owre the sea.

cudgel
 meal and water

rolled, buttocks

He ne'er was gi'en to great misguidin',
 Yet coin his pouches wad na bide in ;
 Wi' him it ne'er was under hidin',
 He dealt it free :
 The Muse was a' that he took pride in,
 That's owre the sea.

pockets would

Jamaica bodies, use him weel,
 An' hap him in a cozie biel ;
 Ye'll find him aye a dainty chiel,
 And fu' o' glee ;
 He wad na wrang'd the vera deil,
 That's owre the sea.

cover, shelter
 fellow

unkind

Fareweel, my rhyme-composing billie!

Your native soil was right ill-willie;

But may ye flourish like a lily,

Now bonnilie!

last gill

I'll toast ye in my hindmost gillie,

Tho' owre the sea!

3. *Edinburgh*

On the twenty-seventh of November, 1786, mounted on a borrowed pony, Burns set out for Edinburgh. He seems to have arrived there without definite plans, for, after having found lodging with his old friend Richmond, he spent the first few days strolling about the city. At home Burns had been an enthusiastic freemason, and it was through a masonic friend, Mr. James Dalrymple of Orangefield, near Ayr, that he was introduced to Edinburgh society. A decade or two earlier, that society, under the leadership of men like Adam Smith and David Hume had reached a high degree of intellectual distinction. A decade or two later, under Sir Walter Scott and the Reviewers it was again to be in some measure, if for the last time, a rival to London as a literary center. But when Burns visited it there was a kind of interregnum, and, little though he or they guessed it, none of the celebri-

ties he met possessed genius comparable to his own. In a very few weeks it was evident that he was to be the lion of the season. By December thirteenth he is writing to a friend at Ayr :

“I have found a worthy warm friend in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, who introduced me to Lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly kindness to me I shall remember when time shall be no more. By his interest it is passed in the Caledonian Hunt, and entered in their books, that they are to take each a copy of the second edition [of the poems], for which they are to pay one guinea. I have been introduced to a good many of the Noblesse, but my avowed patrons and patronesses are the Duchess of Gordon, the Countess of Glencairn, with my Lord and Lady Betty—the Dean of Faculty [Honorable Henry Erskine]—Sir John Whitefoord. I have likewise warm friends among the literati ; Professors [Dugald] Stewart, Blair, and Mr. Mackenzie—the Man of Feeling.”

Through Glencairn he met Creech the bookseller, with whom he arranged for his second edition, and through the patrons he mentions and the

Edinburgh freemasons, among whom he was soon at home, a large subscription list was soon made up. In the *Edinburgh Magazine* for October, November, and December, James Sibbald had published favorable notices of the Kilmarnock edition, with numerous extracts, and when Henry Mackenzie gave it high praise in his *Lounger* for December ninth, and the *London Monthly Review* followed suit in the same month, it was felt that the poet's reputation was established.

Of Burns's bearing in the fashionable and cultivated society into which he so suddenly found himself plunged we have many contemporary accounts. They are practically unanimous in praise of the taste and tact with which he acquitted himself. While neither shy nor aggressive, he impressed every one with his brilliance in conversation, his shrewdness in observation and criticism, and his poise and common sense in his personal relations. One of the best descriptions of him was given by Sir Walter Scott to Lockhart. Scott as a boy of sixteen met Burns at the house of Doctor Adam Ferguson, and thus reports :

“His person was strong and robust ; his manners rustic, not clownish ; a sort of dignified plainness

and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. . . . I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school; that is, none of your modern agriculturists who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce guidman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments: the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a cast which glowed (I say literally glowed) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed an opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. . . . I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird.

I do not speak *in malam partem*, when I say I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station and information, more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the Duchess of Gordon remark this."

Burns's letters written at this time show an amused consciousness of his social prominence, but never for a moment did he lose sight of the fact that it was only the affair of a season, and that in a few months he would have to resume his humble station. Yet this intellectual detachment did not prevent his enjoying opportunities for social and intellectual intercourse such as he had never known and was never again to know. Careful as he was to avoid presuming on his new privileges, he clearly threw himself into the discussions in which he took part with all the zest of his temperament; and in the less formal convivial clubs to which he was welcomed he became at once the king of good fellows. To the noble-

men and others who befriended him he expressed himself in language which may seem exaggerated; but the warmth of his disposition, and the letter writers of the eighteenth century on whom he had formed his style, sufficiently account for it without the suspicion of affectation or flattery. Whatever his vices, ingratitude to those who showed him kindness was not among them; and the sympathetic reader is more apt to feel pathos than to take offense in his tributes to his patrons. The real though not extraordinary kindness of the Earl of Glencairn, for example, was acknowledged again and again in prose and verse; and the *Lament* Burns wrote upon his death closes with these lines which rewarded the noble lord with an immortality he might otherwise have missed:

The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me!

After a sojourn of a little more than five months, Burns left Edinburgh early in May for a

tour in the south of Scotland. The poet was mounted on an old mare, Jenny Geddes, which he had bought in Edinburgh, and which he still owned when he settled at Ellisland. He was accompanied by his bosom friend, Robert Ainslie. The letters and journals written during the four weeks of this tour give evidence of his appreciation of scenery and his shrewd judgment of character. He was received with much consideration in the houses he visited, and was given the freedom of the burgh of Dumfries. On the ninth of June, 1787, he was back at Mauchline; and, calling at Armour's house to see his child, he was revolted by the "mean, servile complaisance" he met with—the result of his Edinburgh triumphs. His disgust at the family, however, did not prevent a renewal of his intimacy with Jean. After a few days at home, he seems to have made a short tour in the West Highlands. July was spent at Mossgiel, and early in August he returned to Edinburgh in order to settle his accounts with Creech, his publisher. On the twenty-fifth he set out for a longer tour in the North accompanied by his friend Nicol, an Edinburgh schoolmaster, the Willie who "brewed a peck o' maut." They proceeded by Linlithgow, Falkirk, Stirling, Crieff,

Dunkeld, Aberfeldie, Blair Athole, Strathspey, to Inverness. The most notable episode of the journey northwards was a visit at the castle of the Duke of Athole, which passed with great satisfaction to both Burns and his hosts, and of which his *Humble Petition of Bruar Water* is a poetical memorial. At Stonehaven and Montrose he extended his acquaintance among his father's relatives. He reached Edinburgh again on September sixteenth, having traveled nearly six hundred miles. In October he made still another excursion, through Clackmannanshire and into the south of Perthshire, visiting Ramsay of Ochtertyre, near Stirling, and Sir William Murray of Ochtertyre in Strathearn. In all these visits made by Burns to the houses of the aristocracy, it is interesting to note his capacity for pleasing and profitable intercourse with people of a class and tradition far removed from his own. Sensitive to an extreme and quick to resent a slight, he was at the same time finely responsive to kindness, and his conduct was governed by a tact and frank naturalness that are among the not least surprising of his powers. In spite of the fervor and floridness of some of his expressions of gratitude for favors from his noble friends, Burns was no

snob; and it was characteristic of him to give up a visit to the Duchess of Gordon rather than separate from his companion Nicol, who, in a fit of jealous sulks, refused to accompany him to Castle Gordon.

The settlement with Creech proved to be a very tedious affair, and in the beginning of December the poet was about to leave the city in disgust when an accident occurred which gave opportunity for one of the most extraordinary episodes in the history of his relations with women. Just before, he had met a Mrs. McLehose who lived in Edinburgh with her three children, while her husband, from whom she had separated on account of ill-treatment, had emigrated to Jamaica. A correspondence began immediately after the first meeting, with the following letter :

“Madam:

“I had set no small store by my tea-drinking tonight, and have not often been so disappointed. Saturday evening I shall embrace the opportunity with the greatest pleasure. I leave this town this day se’ennight, and probably I shall not return for a couple of twelvemonths; but I must ever regret that I so lately got an acquaintance I shall

ever highly esteem, and in whose welfare I shall ever be warmly interested. Our worthy common friend, Miss Nimmo, in her usual pleasant way, rallied me a good deal on my new acquaintance, and, in the humour of her ideas, I wrote some lines, which I enclose to you, as I think they have a good deal of poetic merit; and Miss Nimmo tells me that you are not only a critic but a poetess. Fiction, you know, is the native region of poetry; and I hope you will pardon my vanity in sending you the bagatelle as a tolerable off-hand *jeu d'esprit*. I have several poetic trifles, which I shall gladly leave with Miss Nimmo or you, if they were worth house-room; as there are scarcely two people on earth by whom it would mortify me more to be forgotten, though at the distance of nine score miles. I am, Madam, With the highest respect,

“Your very humble servant,

“ROBERT BURNS.”

[December 6, 1787.]

The night before Burns was to take tea with his new acquaintance, he was overturned by a drunken coachman, and received an injury to his knee which confined him to his rooms for several

weeks. Meantime the correspondence went on with ever-increasing warmth from "Madam," through "My dearest Madam," "my dear kind friend," "my lovely friend," to "my dearest angel." They early agreed to call each other Clarinda and Sylvander, and the Arcadian names are significant of the sentimental nature of the relation. By the time of their second meeting—about a month after the first,—they had exchanged intimate confidences, had discovered endless affinities, and had argued by the page on religion, Clarinda striving to win Sylvander over to her orthodox Calvinism. When he was again able to go out, his visits became for both of them "exquisite" and "rapturous" experiences, Clarinda struggling to keep on the safe side of discretion by means of "Reason" and "Religion," Sylvander protesting his complete submission to her will. The appearance of passion in their letters goes on increasing, and Clarinda's fits of perturbation in the next morning's reflections grow more acute. She does not seem to have become the poet's mistress, and it is impossible to gather what either of them expected the outcome of their intercourse to be. With a few notable exceptions, the verses which were occasioned rather than in-

spired by the affair are affected and artificial; and in spite of the warmth of the expressions in his letters it is hard to believe that his passion went very deep. In any case, on his return to Mauchline to find Jean Armour cast out by her own people after having a second time borne him twins, he faced his responsibilities in a more manly and honorable fashion than ever before, and made Jean his wife. The explanation of his final resolution is given repeatedly in almost the same words in his letters: "I found a much loved female's positive happiness or absolute misery among my hands, and I could not trifle with such a sacred deposit." It would appear that, however far the affair between him and Clarinda had passed beyond the sentimental friendship it began with, he did not regard it as placing in his hands any such "sacred deposit" as the fate of Jean, nor had one or two intrigues with obscure girls in Edinburgh shaken an affection which was much more deep-rooted than he often imagined. Clarinda was naturally deeply wounded by his marriage, and her reproaches of "villainy" led to a breach which was only gradually bridged. At one time, just before she set out for Jamaica to join her husband in an unsuccessful attempt at a rec-

conciliation, Burns's letters again became frequent, the old fervor reappeared, and a couple of his best songs were produced. But at this time he had the—shall we say reassuring?—belief that he was not to see her again, and could indulge an emotion that had always been largely theatrical without risk to either of them. On her return he wrote her, it would seem, only once. For the character of Burns the incident is of much curious interest; for literature its importance lies in the two songs, *Ae fond Kiss* and *My Nannie's Awa*. The former was written shortly before her departure for the West Indies; the second in the summer of her absence. It is noteworthy that in them "Clarinda" has given place to "Nancy" and "Nannie." Beside them is placed for contrast, one of the pure Clarinda effusions.

AE FOND KISS

One

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!
Ae farewell, and then for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.
Who shall say that Fortune grieves him
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me,
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,
 Naething could resist my Nancy;
 But to see her was to love her,
 Love but her, and love for ever.
 Had we never lov'd sae kindly,
 Had we never lov'd sae blindly,
 Never met—or never parted,
 We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest!
 Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest!
 Thine be ilka joy and treasure, every
 Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure,
 Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
 Ae fareweel, alas, for ever!
 Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
 Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

MY NANNIE'S AWA

Now in her green mantle blythe Nature arrays,
 And listens the lambkins that bleat o'er the braes, hillsides
 While birds warble welcomes in ilka green shaw; wooded dell
 But to me it's delightless—my Nannie's awa.

The snawdrap and primrose our woodlands adorn
 And violets bathe in the weat o' the morn: wet (dew)
 They pain my sad bosom, sae sweetly they blaw,
 They mind me o' Nannie—and Nannie's awa.

Thou laverock, that springs frae the dews o' the lawn lark
 The shepherd to warn o' the grey-breaking dawn,
 And thou, mellow mavis, that hails the night-fa', thrush
 Give over for pity—my Nannie's awa.

Come, autumn, sae pensive, in yellow and gray,
And soothe me wi' tidings o' nature's decay;
The dark, dreary winter, and wild-driving snaw
Alane can delight me—now Nannie's awa.

CLARINDA

Clarinda, mistress of my soul,
The measured time is run!
The wretch beneath the dreary pole
So marks his latest sun.

To what dark cave of frozen night
Shall poor Sylvander hie,
Depriv'd of thee, his life and light,
The sun of all his joy?

We part—but by these precious drops
That fill thy lovely eyes!
No other light shall guide my steps
Till thy bright beams arise.

She, the fair sun of all her sex,
Has blest my glorious day;
And shall a glimmering planet fix
My worship to its ray?

4. *Ellisland*

In the spring of 1788 when Burns married
Jean Armour, he took two other steps of the first

importance for his future career. The Edinburgh period had come and gone, and all that his intercourse with his influential friends had brought him was the four or five hundred pounds of profit from his poems and an opportunity to enter the excise service. With part of the money he relieved his brother Gilbert from pressing obligations at Mossgiel by the loan of one hundred and eighty pounds, and with the rest leased the farm of Ellisland on the bank of the Nith, five or six miles above Dumfries. But before taking up the farm he devoted six weeks or so to tuition in the duties of an exciseman, so that he had this occupation to fall back on in case of another farming failure. During the summer he superintended the building of the farm-house, and in December Jean joined her husband. His satisfaction in his domestic situation is characteristically expressed in a song composed about this time.

I HAE A WIFE

I hae a wife o' my ain,
I'll partake wi' naebody;
I'll tak cuckold frae nane,
I'll gie cuckold to naebody.

I hae a penny to spend,
There—thanks to naebody;
I hae naething to lend,
I'll borrow frae naebody.

I am naebody's lord,
I'll be slave to naebody;
I hae a guid braid sword,
I'll tak dunts frae naebody.

blows

I'll be merry and free,
I'll be sad for naebody;
Naebody cares for me,
I care for naebody.

Early in his residence at Ellisland he formed a close relation with a neighboring proprietor, Colonel Robert Riddel. For him he copied into two volumes a large part of what he considered the best of his unpublished verse and prose, thus forming the well-known Glenriddel Manuscript. Had not one already become convinced of the fact from internal evidence, it would be clear enough from this prose volume that Burns's letters were often as much works of art to him as his poems. This is of supreme importance in weighing the epistolary evidence for his character and conduct. Even when his words seem to be the direct outpourings of his feelings—of love, of

friendship, of gratitude, of melancholy, of devotion, of scorn—a comparative examination will show that in prose as much as in verse we are dealing with the work of a conscious artist, enamored of telling expression, aware of his reader, and anything but the naif utterer of unsophisticated emotion. To recall this will save us from much perplexity in the interpretation of his words, and will clear up many an apparent contradiction in his evidence about himself.

Burns was never very sanguine about success on the Ellisland farm. By the end of the summer of 1789 he concluded that he could not depend on it, determined to turn it into a dairy farm to be conducted mainly by his wife and sisters, and took up the work in the excise for which he had prepared himself. He had charge of a large district of ten parishes, and had to ride some two hundred miles a week in all weathers. With the work he still did on the farm one can see that he was more than fully employed, and need not wonder that there was little time for poetry. Yet these years at Ellisland were on the whole happy years for himself and his family; he found time for pleasant intercourse with some of his neighbors, for a good deal of letter-writing,

for some interest in politics, and for the establishing, with Colonel Riddel, of a small neighborhood library. As an excise officer he seems to have been conscientious and efficient, though at times, in the case of poor offenders, he tempered justice with mercy. Ultimately, despairing of making the farm pay and hoping for promotion in the government service, he gave up his lease, sold his stock, and in the autumn of 1791 moved to Dumfries, where he was given a district which did not involve keeping a horse, and which paid him about seventy pounds a year. Thus ended the last of Burns's disastrous attempts to make a living from the soil.

5. *Dumfries*

The house in which the Burnses with their three sons first lived in Dumfries was a three-roomed cottage in the Wee Vennel, now Banks Street. Though his income was small, it must be remembered that the cost of food was low. "Beef was 3d. to 5d. a lb.; mutton, 3d to 4½d.; chickens, 7d. to 8d. a pair; butter (the lb. of 24 oz.), 7d. to 9d.; salmon, 6d. to 9½d. a lb.; cod, 1d. and even ½d. a lb." Though hardly in easy circumstances, then, Burns's situation was such

that it was possible to avoid his greatest horror, debt.

Meantime, his interest in politics had greatly quickened. He had been from youth a sentimental Jacobite; but this had little effect upon his attitude toward the parties of the day. In Edinburgh he had worn the colors of the party of Fox, presumably out of compliment to his Whig friends, Glencairn and Erskine. During the Ellisland period, however, he had written strongly against the Regency Bill supported by Fox; and in the general election of 1790 he opposed the Duke of Queensberry and the local Whig candidate. But in his early months in Dumfries we find him showing sympathy with the doctrines of the French Revolution, a sympathy which was natural enough in a man of his inborn democratic tendencies. A curious outcome of these was an incident not yet fully cleared up. In February, 1792, Burns, along with some fellow officers, assisted by a body of dragoons, seized an armed smuggling brig which had run aground in the Solway, and on her being sold, he bought for three pounds four of the small guns she carried. These he is said to have presented "to the French Convention," but they

were seized by the British Government at Dover. As a matter of fact, the Convention was not constituted till September, and the Legislative Assembly which preceded it was not hostile to Britain. Thus, Burns's action, though eccentric and extravagant, was not treasonable in law or in spirit, and does not seem to have entailed on him any unfortunate consequences.

In the course of that year symptoms of the infection of part of the British public with revolutionary principles began to be evident, and the government was showing signs of alarm. The Whig opposition was clamoring for internal reform, and Burns sided more and more definitely with it, and was rash enough to subscribe for a Reform paper called *The Gazetteer*, an action which would have put him under suspicion from his superiors, had it become known. Some notice of his Liberal tendencies did reach his official superiors, and an inquiry was made into his political principles which caused him no small alarm. In a letter to Mr. Graham of Fintry, through whom he had obtained his position, he disclaimed all revolutionary beliefs and all political activity. No action was taken against him, nor was his failure to obtain promotion to an Exam-

inership due to anything but the slow progress involved in promotion by seniority. Hereafter, he exercised considerable caution in the expression of his political sympathies, though he allowed himself to associate with men of revolutionary opinions. The feeling that he was not free to utter what he believed on public affairs was naturally chafing to a man of his independent nature.

Burns's chief enjoyment in these days was the work he was doing for Scottish song. While in Edinburgh he had made the acquaintance of an engraver, James Johnson, who had undertaken the publication of the *Scots Musical Museum*, a collection of songs and music. Burns agreed to help him by the collection and refurbishing of the words of old songs, and when these were impossible, by providing new words for the melodies. The work finally extended to six volumes; and before it was finished a more ambitious undertaking, managed by a Mr. George Thomson, was set on foot. Burns was invited to cooperate in this also, and entered into it with such enthusiasm that he was Thomson's main support. In both of these publications the poet worked purely with patriotic motives and for the love of song, and had no pecuniary interest in either. Once Thom-

son sent him a present of five pounds and endangered their relations thereby; later, when Burns was in his last illness, he asked and received from Thomson an advance of the same amount. Apart from these sums Burns never made or sought to make a penny from his writings after the publication of the first Edinburgh edition. Twice he declined journalistic work for a London paper. Poetry was the great consolation of his life, and even in his severest financial straits he refused to consider the possibility of writing for money, regarding it as a kind of prostitution.

By the autumn of 1795 signs began to appear that the poet's constitution was breaking down. The death of his daughter Elizabeth and a severe attack of rheumatism plunged him into deep melancholy and checked for a time his song-writing; and though for a time he recovered, his disease returned early in the next year. It seems clear, too, that though the change from Ellisland to Dumfries relieved him of much of the severer physical exertion, other factors more than counterbalanced this relief. Burns had never been a slave to drink for its own sake; it had always been the accompaniment—in those days an almost

inevitable accompaniment—of sociability. Some of his wealthier friends in the vicinity were in this respect rather excessive in their hospitality; in Dumfries the taverns were always at hand; and as Burns came to realize the comparative failure of his career as a man, he found whisky more and more a means of escape for depression. Even if we distrust the local gossip that made much of the dissipations of his later years, it appears from the evidence of his physician that alcohol had much to do with the rheumatic and digestive troubles that finally broke him down. In July, 1796, he was sent, as a last resort, to Brow-on-Solway to try sea-bathing and country life; but he returned little improved, and well-nigh convinced that his illness was mortal. His mental condition is shown by the fact that pressure from a solicitor for the payment of a tailor's debt of some seven pounds, incurred for his volunteer's uniform, threw him into a panic lest he should be imprisoned, and his last letters are pitiful requests for financial help, and two notes to his father-in-law urging him to send her mother to Jean, as she was about to give birth to another child. In such harassing conditions he sank into delirium, and died on July 21, 1796.

The child, who died in infancy, was born on the day his father was buried.

With Burns's death a reaction in popular opinion set in. He was given a military funeral; and a subscription which finally amounted to one thousand two hundred pounds was raised for his family. The official biography, by Doctor Currie of Liverpool, doubled this sum, so that Jean was enabled to bring up the children respectably, and end her days in comfort. Scotland, having done little for Burns in his life, was stricken with remorse when he died, and has sought ever since to atone for her neglect by an idolatry of the poet and by a more than charitable view of the man.

CHAPTER II

INHERITANCE: LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

THREE forms of speech were current in Scotland in the time of Burns, and, in different proportions, are current to-day: in the Highlands, north and west of a slanting line running from the Firth of Clyde to Aberdeenshire, Gaelic; in the Lowlands, south and east of the same line, Lowland Scots; over the whole country, among the more educated classes, English. Gaelic is a Celtic language, belonging to an entirely different linguistic group from English, and having close affinities to Irish and Welsh. This tongue Burns did not know. Lowland Scots is a dialect of English, descended from the Northumbrian dialect of Anglo-Saxon. It has had a history of considerable interest. Down to the time of Chaucer, whose influence had much to do with making the Midland dialect the literary standard for the Southern kingdom, it is difficult to distinguish the written language of Edinburgh

from that of York, both being developments of Northumbrian. But as English writers tended more and more to conform to the standard of London, Northern Middle English gradually ceased to be written; while in Scotland, separated and usually hostile as it was politically, the Northern speech continued to develop along its own lines, until in the beginning of the sixteenth century it attained a form more remote from standard English and harder for the modern reader than it had been a century before. The close connection between Scotland and France, continuing down to the time of Queen Mary, led to the introduction of many French words which never found a place in English; the proximity of the Highlands made Gaelic borrowings easy; and the Scandinavian settlements on both coasts contributed additional elements to the vocabulary. Further, in its comparative isolation, Scots developed or retained peculiarities in grammar and pronunciation unknown or lost in the South. Thus by 1550, the form of English spoken in Scotland was in a fair way to become an independent language.

This process, however, was rudely halted by the Reformation. The triumph of this movement

in England and its comparative failure in France threw Scotland, when it became Protestant, into close relations with England, while the "auld Alliance" with France practically ended when Mary of Scots returned to her native country. Leaders like John Knox, during the early struggles of the Reformation, spent much time in England; and when they came home their speech showed the effect of their intercourse with their southern brethren of the reformed faith. The language of Knox, as recorded in his sermons and his *History*, is indeed far from Elizabethan English, but it is notably less "broad" than the Scots of Douglas and Lindesay. Scotland had no vernacular translation of the Bible; and this important fact, along with the English associations of many of the Protestant ministers, finally made the speech of the Scottish pulpit, and later of Scottish religion in general, if not English, at least as purely English as could be achieved.

The process thus begun was carried farther in the next generation when, in 1603, James VI of Scotland became King of England, and the Court removed to London. England at that time was, of course, much more advanced in culture than its poorer neighbor to the north, and the courtiers

who accompanied James to London found themselves marked by their speech as provincial, and set themselves to get rid of their Scotticisms with an eagerness in proportion to their social aspirations. Scottish men of letters now came into more intimate relation with English literature, and finding that writing in English opened to them a much larger reading public, they naturally adopted the southern speech in their books. Thus men like Alexander, Earl of Stirling, and William Drummond of Hawthornden belong both in language and literary tradition to the English Elizabethans.

Religion, society, and literature having all thrown their influence against the native speech of Scotland, it followed that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the progressive disuse of that speech among the upper classes of the country, until by the time of Burns, Scots was habitually spoken only by the peasantry and the humbler people in the towns. The distinctions between social classes in the matter of dialect were, of course, not absolute. Occasional members even of the aristocracy prided themselves on their command of the vernacular; and among the country folk there were few who could not

make a brave attempt at English when they spoke with the laird or the minister. With Burns himself, Lowland Scots was his customary speech at home, about the farm, in the tavern and the Freemasons' lodge; but, as we have seen, his letters, being written mainly to educated people, are almost all pure English, as was his conversation with these people when he met them.

The linguistic situation that has been sketched finds interesting illustration in the language of Burns's poems. The distinction which is usually made, that he wrote poetry in Scots and verse in English, has some basis, but is inaccurately expressed and needs qualification. The fundamental fact is that for him Scots was the natural language of the emotions, English of the intellect. The Scots poems are in general better, not chiefly because they are in Scots but because they are concerned with matters of natural feeling; the English poems are in general poetically poorer, not because they are in English but because they are so frequently the outcome of moods not dominated by spontaneous emotion, but intellectual, conscious, or theatrical. He wrote English sometimes as he wore his Sunday blacks, with dignity but not with ease; sometimes as he wore

the buff and blue, with buckskins and top-boots, which he donned in Edinburgh—"like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird." In both cases he was capable of vigorous, common-sense expression; in neither was he likely to exhibit the imagination, the tenderness, or the humor which characterized the plowman clad in home-spun.

The Cotter's Saturday Night is an interesting illustration of these distinctions. The opening stanza is a dedicatory address on English models to a lawyer friend and patron; it is pure English in language, stiff and imitatively "literary" in style. The stanzas which follow describing the homecoming of the cotter, the family circle, the supper, and the daughter's suitor, are in broad Scots, the language harmonizing perfectly with the theme, and they form poetically the sound core of the poem. In the description of family worship, Burns did what his father would do in conducting that worship, adopted English as more reverent and respectful, but inevitably as more restrained emotionally; and in the moralizing passage which follows, as in the apostrophes to Scotia and to the Almighty at the close, he naturally sticks to English, and in spite of a genuine

enough exaltation of spirit achieves a result rather rhetorical than poetical.

Contrast again songs like *Corn Rigs* or *Whistle and I'll Come To Thee, My Lad*, with most of the songs to Clarinda. The former, in Scots, are genial, whole-hearted, full of the power of kindling imaginative sympathy, thoroughly contagious in their lusty emotion or sly humor. The latter, in English, are stiff, coldly contrived, consciously elegant or marked by the sentimental factitiousness of the affair that occasioned them. But their inferiority is due less to the difference in language than to the difference in the mood. When, especially at a distance, his relation to Clarinda really touched his imagination, we have the genuinely poetical *My Nannie's Awa* and *Ae Fond Kiss*. The latter poem can be, with few changes, turned into English without loss of quality; and its most famous lines have almost no dialect:

Had we never lov'd sae kindly,
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Finally, there are the English poems to High-

land Mary. For some reason not yet fully understood, the affair with Mary Campbell was treated by him in a spirit of reverence little felt in his other love poetry, and this spirit was naturally expressed by him in English. But in the almost English

"Ye banks and braes and streams around
The Castle of Montgomery,"

and in the pure English *To Mary in Heaven*, he is not at all hampered by the use of the Southern speech. Scots would not have heightened the poetry here, and for Burns Scots would have been less appropriate, less natural even, for the expression of an almost sacred theme.

The case, then, seems to stand thus. Burns commanded two languages, which he employed instinctively for different kinds of subject and mood. The subjects and moods which evoked vernacular utterance were those that with all writers are more apt to yield poetry, and in consequence most of his best poetry is in Scots. But when a theme naturally evoking English was imaginatively felt by him, the use of English did not prevent his writing poetically. And there were themes which he could handle equally well

in either speech—as we see, for example, in the songs in *The Jolly Beggars*.

Yet the language had an importance in itself. Though its vocabulary is limited in matters of science, philosophy, religion, and the like, Lowland Scots is very rich in homely terms and in humorous and tender expressions. For love, or for celebrating the effects of whisky, English is immeasurably inferior. The free use of the diminutive termination in *ie* or *y*—a termination capable of expressing endearment, familiarity, ridicule, and contempt as well as mere smallness—not only has considerable effect in emotional shading, but contributes to the liquidness of the verse by lessening the number of consonantal endings that make English seem harsh and abrupt to many foreign ears. Moreover, the very indeterminateness of the dialect, the possibility of using varying degrees of “broadness,” increased the facility of rhyming, and added notably to the ease and spontaneity of composition. Thus in Scots Burns was not only more at home, but had a medium in some respects more plastic than English.

Language, however, was not the only element in his inheritance which helped to determine the

nature and quality of Burns's production. He was extremely sensitive to suggestion from his predecessors, and frankly avowed his obligations to them, so that to estimate his originality it is necessary to know something of the men at whose flame he kindled.

As the Northern dialect of English was, before the Reformation, in a fair way to become an independent national speech, so literature north of the Tweed had promise of a development, not indeed independent, but distinct. Of the writers of the Middle Scots period, Henryson and Dunbar, Douglas and Lindesay, Burns, it is true, knew little; and the tradition that they founded underwent in the latter part of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries an experience in many respects parallel to that which has been described in the matter of language. The effect of the Reformation upon all forms of artistic creation will be discussed when we come to speak particularly of the history of Scottish song; for the moment it is sufficient to say that the absorption in theological controversy was unfavorable to the continuation of a poetical development. Under James VI, however, there were a few writers who maintained the tradition, notably

Alexander Montgomery, Alexander Scott, and the Sempills. To the first of these is to be credited the invention of the stanza called, from the poems in which Montgomery used it, the stanza of *The Banks of Helicon* or of *The Cherry and the Slae*. It was imitated by some of Montgomery's contemporaries, revived by Allan Ramsay, and thus came to Burns down a line purely Scottish, as it never seems to have been used in any other tongue. He first employed it in the *Epistle to Davie*, and it was made by him the medium of some of his most characteristic ideas.

It's no in titles nor in rank:
 It's no in wealth like Lon'on Bank,
 To purchase peace and rest.
 It's no in makin muckle, mair,
 It's no in books, it's no in lear,
 To make us truly blest:
 If happiness hae not her seat
 An' centre in the breast,
 We may be wise, or rich, or great,
 But never can be blest!
 Nae treasures nor pleasures
 Could make us happy lang;
 The heart's aye's the part aye
 That makes us right or wrang.

much, more
 learning

The Piper of Kilbarchan, by Sir Robert Sempill of Beltrees (1595?-1661?), set a model for

the humorous elegy on the living which reached Burns through Ramsay and Fergusson, and was followed by him in those on Poor Mailie and Tam Samson. The stanza in which it is written is far older than Sempill, having been traced as far back as the troubadours in the twelfth century, and being found frequently in both English and French through the Middle Ages; but from the time of Sempill on, it was cultivated with peculiar intensity in Scotland, and is the medium of so many of Burns's best-known pieces that it is often called Burns's stanza.

Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears tricklin' down your nose;
Our Bardie's fate is at a close,
Past a' remead;
The last, sad cape-stane o' his woe 's—
Poor Mailie's dead!

The seventeenth century was a barren one for Scottish literature. The attraction of the larger English public and the disuse of the vernacular among the upper classes already discussed, drew to the South or to the Southern speech whatever literary talent appeared in the North, and it seemed for a time that, except for the obscure stream of folk poetry, Scottish vernacular litera-

ture was at an end. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, interest began to revive. In 1706-9-11 James Watson published the three volumes of his *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems*, and in the third decade began to appear Allan Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellany* (1724-40). These collections rescued from oblivion a large quantity of vernacular verse, some of it drawn from manuscripts of pre-Reformation poetry, some of it contemporary, some of it anonymous and of uncertain date, having come down orally or in chap-books and broadsides. The welcome given to these volumes was an early instance of that renewed interest in older and more primitive literature that was manifested still more strikingly when Percy published his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* in 1765. Its influence on the production of vernacular literature was evident at once in the original work of Ramsay himself; and the movement which culminated in Burns, though having its roots far back in the work of Henryson and Dunbar, was in effect a Scottish renaissance, in which the chief agents before Burns were Hamilton of Gilbertfield, Ramsay himself, Robert Fergusson, and

song-writers like Mrs. Cockburn and Lady Anne Lindsay.

Of this fact Burns was perfectly aware, and he was not only candid but generous in his acknowledgment of his debt to his immediate predecessors.

head would be
turned
climb

hills

lawyer-fellow

My senses wad be in a creel,
Should I but dare a hope to speel,
Wi' Allan, or wi' Gilbertfield,
The braes o' fame;
Or Fergusson, the writer-chiel,
A deathless name.

He knew Ramsay's collection and had a perhaps exaggerated admiration for *The Gentle Shepherd*. This poem, published in 1728, not only holds a unique position in the history of the pastoral drama, but is important in the present connection as being to Burns the most signal evidence of the possibility of a dignified literature in the modern vernacular. Hamilton and Ramsay had exchanged rhyming epistles in the six-line stanza, and in these Burns found the model for his own epistles. Hamilton's *Last Dying Words of Bonny Heck*—a favorite greyhound—had been imitated by Ramsay in *Lucky Spence's Last Advice* and the *Last Speech of a*

Wretched Miser, and the form had become a Scottish convention before Burns produced his *Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie*. As important as any of these was the example set by Ramsay and bettered by Burns of refurbishing old indecent or fragmentary songs. Robert Fergusson (1750-1774) was regarded by Burns still more highly than Ramsay, and his influence was even more potent. In his autobiographical letter to Doctor Moore he tells that about 1782 he had all but given up rhyming: "but meeting with Fergusson's *Scotch Poems*, I strung anew my wildly-sounding, rustic lyre with emulating vigour." In the preface to the Kilmarnock edition he is still more explicit as to his attitude.

"To the poems of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawnings of the poor, unfortunate Fergusson, he, with equal unaffected sincerity, declares, that, even in the highest pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scotch Poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame, than for servile imitation."

To be more specific, Burns found the model

for his *Cotter's Saturday Night* in Fergusson's *Farmer's Ingle*, for *The Holy Fair* in his *Leith Races*, for *Scotch Drink* in his *Caller Water*, for *The Twa Dogs* and *The Brigs of Ayr* in his *Planestanes and Causey*, and *Kirkyard Eclogues*. In later years Burns grew somewhat more critical of Ramsay, especially as a reviser of old songs; but for Fergusson he retained to the end a sympathetic admiration. When he went to Edinburgh, one of his first places of pilgrimage was the grave of him whom he apostrophized thus,

O thou, my elder brother in misfortune,
By far my elder brother in the muse!

And he later obtained from the managers of the Canongate Kirk permission to erect a stone over the tomb.

The fact, then, that Burns owed much to the tradition of vernacular poetry in Scotland and especially to his immediate predecessors is no new discovery, however recent critics may have plumed themselves upon it. Burns knew it well, and was ever ready to acknowledge it. What is more important than the mere fact of his inheritance is the use he made of it. In taking from

his elders the fruits of their experience in poetical conception and metrical arrangement, he but did what artists have always done; in outdistancing these elders and in almost every case surpassing their achievement on the lines they had laid down, he did what only the greater artists succeed in doing. It is not in mere inventiveness and novelty but in first-hand energy of conception, in mastering for himself the old thought and the old form and uttering them with his personal stamp, in making them carry over to the reader with a new force or vividness or beauty, that the poet's originality consists. In these respects Burns's originality is no whit lessened by an explicit recognition of his indebtedness to the stock from which he grew.

His relation to the purely English literature which he read is different and produced very different results. Shakespeare he revered, and that he knew him well is shown by the frequency of Shakespearean turns of phrase in his letters, as well as by direct quotation. But of influence upon his poetry there is little trace. He had a profound admiration for the indomitable will of Milton's Satan, and he makes it clear that this admiration affected his conduct. The most fre-

quent praise of English writers in his letters is, however, given to the eighteenth-century authors—to Pope, Thomson, Shenstone, Gray, Young, Blair, Beattie, and Goethe in verse, to Sterne, Smollett, and Henry Mackenzie in prose. Echoes of these poets are common in his work, and the most frigid of his English verses show their influence most clearly. To the sentimental tendency in the thought of the eighteenth century he was highly responsive, and the expression of it in *The Man of Feeling* appealed to him especially. In a mood which recurred painfully often he was apt to pride himself on his “sensibility”: the letters to Clarinda are full of it. The less fortunate effects of it are seen both in his conduct and in his poems in a fondness for nursing his emotions and extracting pleasure from his supposed miseries; the more fortunate aspects are reflected in the tender humanity of poems like those *To a Mouse*, *On Seeing a Wounded Hare*, and *To a Daisy*—perhaps even in the *Address to the Deil*. He had naturally a warm heart and strong impulses; it is only when an element of consciousness or mawkishness appears that his “sensibility” is to be ascribed to the fashionable philosophy

of the day and the influence of his English models.

For better or worse, then, Burns belongs to the literary history of Britain as a legitimate descendant of easily traced ancestors. Like other great writers he made original contributions from his individual temperament and from his particular environment and experience. But these do not obliterate the marks of his descent, nor are they so numerous or powerful as to give support to the old myth of the "rustic phenomenon," the isolated poetical miracle appearing in defiance of the ordinary laws of literary dependence and tradition.

If this is true of his models it is no less true of his methods. Though simplicity and spontaneity are among the most obvious of the qualities of his work, it is not to be supposed that such effects were obtained by a birdlike improvisation. "All my poetry," he said, "is the effect of easy composition but laborious correction," and the careful critic will perceive ample evidence in support of the statement. We shall see in the next chapter with what pains he fitted words to melody in his songs; an examination of the variant

readings which make the establishment of his text peculiarly difficult shows abundant traces of deliberation and the labor of the file. In the following song, the first four lines of which are old, it is interesting to note that, though he preserves admirably the tone of the fragment which gave him the impulse and the idea, the twelve lines which he added are in the effects produced by manipulation of the consonants and vowels and in the use of internal rhyme a triumph of conscious artistic skill. The interest in technique which this implies is exhibited farther in many passages of his letters, especially those to George Thomson.

GO FETCH TO ME A PINT O' WINE

goblet

Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,

An' fill it in a silver tassie;

That I may drink, before I go,

A service to my bonnie lassie.

The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith,

from

Fu' loud the wind blows frae the ferry,

The ship rides by the Berwick-law,

must

And I maun leave my bonnie Mary.

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,

The glittering spears are rankèd ready;

The shouts o' war are heard afar,

The battle closes thick and bloody;

But it's no the roar o' sea or shore
 Wad mak me langer wish to tarry;
Nor shout o' war that's heard afar,
 It's leaving thee, my bonnie Mary.

CHAPTER III

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG

WITH song-writing Burns began his poetical career, with song-writing he closed it; and, brilliant as was his achievement in other fields, it is as a song-writer that he ranks highest among his peers, it is through his songs that he has rooted himself most deeply in the hearts of his countrymen.

The most notable and significant fact in connection with his making of songs is their relation to the melodies to which they are sung. In the vast majority of cases these are old Scottish tunes, which were known to Burns before he wrote his songs, and were singing in his ear during the process of composition. The poet was no technical musician. Murdoch, his first teacher, says that Robert and Gilbert Burns "were left far behind by all the rest of the school" when he tried to teach them a little church music. "Robert's ear, in particular, was remarkably dull, and

his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another." Either Murdoch exaggerated, or the poet's ear developed later (Murdoch is speaking of him between the ages of six and nine); for he learned to fiddle a little, once at least attempted to compose an air, could read music fairly easily, and could write down a melody from memory. His correspondence with Johnson and Thomson shows that he knew a vast number of old tunes and was very sensitive to their individual quality and suggestion.¹ Such a sentence as the following from

¹ The question of the nature and extent of Burns's musical abilities may be summed up in the words of the latest and most thorough student of his melodies:—"His knowledge of music was in fact elemental; his taste lay entirely in melody, without ever reaching an appreciation of contra-puntal or harmonious music. Nor, although in his youth he had learned the grammar of music and become acquainted with clefs, keys, and notes at the rehearsals of church music, which were in his day a practical part of the education of the Scottish peasantry, did he ever arrive at composition, except in the case of one melody which he composed for a song of his own at the age of about twenty-three, and this melody displeased him so much that he destroyed it and never attempted another. In the same way, although he practised the violin, he did not attain to excellence in execution, his playing being confined to strathspeys and other slow airs of the pathetic kind. On the other hand, his perception and his love of music are undeniable. For example, he possessed copies of the principal collections of Scottish vocal and instrumental music of the eighteenth century, and repeatedly refers to them in the Museum and in his letters. His copy of the *Caledonian Pocket Companion* (the largest collection of Scottish music), which copy still exists with pencil notes in his handwriting, proves that he was familiar with the whole contents. At intervals in his writings he names at least a dozen different collections to which he refers and from which he quotes with personal knowledge. Also he knew several hundred different airs, not vaguely and in a misty way, but accurately as regards

one of his Commonplace Books shows how important his responsiveness to music was for his poetical composition.

“These old Scottish airs are so nobly sentimental that when one would compose to them, to *south* the tune, as our Scottish phrase is, over and over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration and raise the Bard into that glorious enthusiasm so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch Poetry.”

Again, once when Thomson had sent him a tune to be fitted with words, he replied :

“*Laddie lie near me must lie by me* for some time. I do not know the air ; and until I am complete master of a tune in my own singing (such as it is), I never can compose for it. My way is : I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression ; then choose my theme ; begin one stanza ; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part

tune, time, and rhythm, so that he could distinguish one from another, and describe minute variations in the several copies of any tune which passed through his hands. . . . Many of the airs he studied and selected for his verses were either pure instrumental tunes, never before set to words, or the airs (from dance books) of lost songs, with the first lines as titles.”—(James C. Dick, *The Songs of Robert Burns*, 1903, Preface, pp. viii, ix.)

of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for subjects in nature around me that are in unison and harmony with the cogitations of my fancy and workings of my bosom, humming every now and then the air with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study, and then commit my effusion to paper; swinging at intervals on the hindlegs of my elbow chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures as my pen goes on. Seriously, this at home is almost invariably my way." [September, 1793.]

His wife, who had a good voice and a wide knowledge of folk-song, seems often to have been of assistance, and a further interesting detail is given by Sir James Stuart-Menteath from the evidence of a Mrs. Christina Flint.

"When Burns dwelt at Ellisland, he was accustomed, after composing any of his beautiful songs, to pay Kirsty a visit, that he might hear them sung by her. He often stopped her in the course of the singing when he found any word harsh and grating to his ear, and substituted one

more melodious and pleasing. From Kirsty's extensive acquaintance with the old Scottish airs, she was frequently able to suggest to the poet music more suitable to the song she was singing than that to which he had set it."

Kirsty and Jean were not his only aids in the criticism of the musical quality of his songs. From the time of the Edinburgh visit, at least, he was in the habit of seizing the opportunity afforded by the possession of a harpsichord or a good voice by the daughters of his friends, and in several cases he rewarded his accompanist by making her the heroine of the song. Without drawing on the evidence of parallel phenomena in other ages and literatures, we can be sure enough that this persistent consciousness of the airs to which his songs were to be sung, and this critical observation of their fitness, had much to do with the extraordinary melodiousness of so many of them.

We have seen that Burns received an important impulse to productiveness through his co-operation in the compiling of two national song collections. James Johnson, the editor of the first of these, was an all but illiterate engraver,

ill-equipped for such an undertaking; and as the work grew in scale until it reached six volumes, Burns became virtually the editor—even writing the prefaces to several of the volumes. George Thomson, the editor of the other, *A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs*, was a government clerk, an amateur in music, of indifferent taste and with a preference for English to the vernacular. In his collection the airs were harmonized by Pleyel, Kozeluch, Haydn, and Beethoven; and he had the impudence to meddle with the contributions both of Burns and of the eminent composers who arranged the melodies. Nothing is more striking than the patience and modesty of Burns in tolerating the criticism and alterations of Thomson. The main purpose in both *The Scots Musical Museum* and the *Select Collection* was the preservation of the national melodies, but when the editors came to seek words to go with them they found themselves confronted with a difficult problem. To understand its nature, it will be necessary to extend our historical survey.

In addition to the effects of the Reformation in Scotland already indicated, there was another even more serious for arts and letters. The re-

action against Catholicism in Scotland was peculiarly violent, and the form of Protestantism which replaced it was extremely puritanical. In the matter of intellectual education, it is true, Knox's ideas and institutions were enlightened, and have borne important fruit in making prevail in his country an uncommonly high level of general education and a reverence for learning. But on the artistic side the reformed ministers were the enemies not only of everything that suggested the ornateness of the old religion, but of beauty in every form. Under their influence, an influence extraordinarily pervasive and despotic, art and song were suppressed, and Scotland was left a very mirthless country, absorbed in theological and political discussion, and having little outlet for the instinct of sport except heresy-hunting.

Such at least seemed to be the case on the surface. But human nature is not to be totally changed even by such a force as the Reformation. Especially among the peasantry occasions recurred—weddings, funerals, harvest-homes, New-Year's Eves, and the like—when, the minister being at a safe distance and whisky having relaxed the awe of the kirk session, the “wee sinfu’

fiddle" was produced, and song and the dance broke forth. It was under such clandestine conditions that the traditional songs of Scotland had been handed down for some generations before Burns's day, and the conditions had gravely affected their character. The melodies could not be stained, but the words had degenerated until they had lost most of whatever imaginative quality they had possessed, and had acquired instead only grossness.

Such words, it was clear, Johnson could not use in his *Museum*, and the discovery of Burns was to him the most extraordinary good fortune. For Burns not only knew, as we have seen, the old songs—words and airs—by the score, but was able to purify, complete, or replace the words according to the degree of their corruption. Various poets have caught up scraps of folk-song and woven them into their verse; but nowhere else has a poet of the people appeared with such a rare combination of original genius and sympathetic feeling for the tone and accent of the popular muse, as enabled Burns to recreate Scottish song. If patriotic Scots wish to justify the achievement of Burns on moral grounds, it is here that their argument lies: for whatever of coarse-

ness and license there may have been in his life and writings, it is surely more than counter-balanced by the restoration to his people of the possibility of national music and clean mirth.

One can not classify the songs of Burns into two clearly separated groups, original and remodeled, for no hard lines can be drawn. Since he practically always began with the tune, he frequently used the title or the first line of the old song. He might do this, yet completely change the idea; or he might retain the idea but use none of the old words. In other cases the first stanza or the chorus is retained; in still others the new song is sprinkled with here a phrase and there an epithet recalling the derelict that gave rise to it. Some are made up of stanzas from several different predecessors, others are almost centos of stock phrases.

The contribution thus made to Johnson's collection, of songs rescued or remade or wholly original, amounted to some one hundred eighty-four; to Thomson's about sixty-four. Some examples will make clear the nature of his services.

Auld Lang Syne, perhaps the most wide-spread of all songs among the English-speaking peoples,

is in its oldest extant form attributed on uncertain grounds to Francis Sempill of Beltrees or Sir Robert Aytoun.¹ That still older forms had existed appears from its title in the broadside in which it is preserved :

“An excellent and proper new ballad, entitled Old Long Syne. Newly corrected and amended, with a large and new edition [sic] of several excellent love lines.”

It opens thus :

Should old acquaintance be forgot
And never thought upon,
The Flames of Love extinguishèd
And freely past and gone?
Is thy kind Heart now grown so cold
In that Loving Breast of thine,
That thou can'st never once reflect
On old-long-syne.

And so on, for eighty lines.

Allan Ramsay rewrote it for his *Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724), and a specimen stanza will show that it was still going down-hill :

¹ The melody to which the song is now sung is not that to which Burns wrote it, but was an old strathspey tune. It is possible, however, that he agreed to its adoption by Thomson.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot
 Tho' they return with scars?
 These are the noble hero's lot,
 Obtain'd in glorious wars;
 Welcome, my Varo, to my breast,
 Thy arms about me twine,
 And make me once again as blest
 As I was lang syne.

The remaining four stanzas are worse. Burns may have had further hints to work on which are now lost; but the best part of the song, stanzas three and four, are certainly his, and it is unlikely that he inherited more than some form of the first verse and the chorus.

AULD LANG SYNE

old
 mind

Should auld acquaintance be forgot
 And never brought to min'?
 Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
 And auld lang syne?

long ago

For auld lang syne, my dear.
 For auld lang syne,
 We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
 For auld lang syne.

will pay for

And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp,
 And surely I'll be mine;
 And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
 For auld lang syne.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 101

We twa hae run about the braes,	two have, hill-
And pu'd the gowans fine;	sides
But we've wander'd mony a weary foot	pulled, daisies
Sin' auld lang syne.	

We twa hae paidled i' the burn,	waded, brook
From morning sun till dine;	noon
But seas between us braid hae roar'd	broad
Sin' auld lang syne.	

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere,	comrade
And gie's a hand o' thine;	give me
And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught,	draught of good
For auld lang syne.	will

A more remarkable case of patchwork is *A Red, Red Rose*. Antiquarian research has discovered in chap-books and similar sources four songs, from each of which a stanza, in some such form as follows, seems to have proved suggestive to Burns:

(1) Her cheeks are like the Roses
 That blossom fresh in June,
 O, she's like a new strung instrument
 That's newly put in tune.

(2) Altho' I go a thousand miles
 I vow thy face to see,
 Altho' I go ten thousand miles
 I'll come again to thee, dear Love,
 I'll come again to thee.

- (3) The seas they shall run dry,
And rocks melt into sands;
Then I'll love you still, my dear,
When all those things are done.
- (4) Fare you well, my own true love,
And fare you well for a while,
And I will be sure to return back again,
If I go ten thousand mile.

The genealogy of the lyric is still more complicated than these sources imply, but the specimens given are enough to show the nature of the ore from which Burns extracted the pure gold of his well-known song:

MY LOVE IS LIKE A RED RED ROSE

O, my love is like a red red rose
That's newly sprung in June:
O, my love is like the melody
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in love am I:
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
And I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only love,
 And fare thee weel a while!
 And I will come again, my love,
 Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

Of the songs already quoted, the germ of *Æ Fond Kiss* lies in the first line of Robert Dodsley's *Parting Kiss*,

“One fond kiss before we part;”

I Hae a Wife o' My Ain, borrows with slight modification the first two lines; a model for *My Nannie O* has been found in an anonymous eighteenth-century fragment as well as in a song of Ramsay's, but neither contributes more than the phrase which names the tune as well as the words; *The Rigs o' Barley* was suggested by a verse of an old song:

O, corn rigs and rye rigs,
 O, corn rigs are bonie;
 And whene'er you meet a bonie lass
 Preen up her cockernonie.

Handsome Nell, *Mary Morison*, *Will Ye Go to the Indies*, *The Gloomy Night*, and *My Nannie's Awa* are entirely original; and a comparison of their poetical quality with those having their

model or starting point in an older song will show that, however brilliantly Burns acquitted himself in his task of refurbishing traditional material, he was in no way dependent upon such material for inspiration.

From what has been said of the occasions of these verses, however, it is clear that inspiration from the outside was not lacking. The traditional association of wine, woman, and song certainly held for Burns, nearly all his lyrics being the outcome of his devotion to at least two of these, some of them, like the following, to all three.

YESTREEN I HAD A PINT O' WINE

Last night
nobody saw

golden

honey

Yestreen I had a pint o' wine,
A place where body saw na';
Yestreen lay on this breast o' mine
The gowden locks of Anna.
The hungry Jew in wilderness
Rejoicing o'er his manna,
Was naething to my hinny bliss
Upon the lips of Anna.

Ye monarchs, tak the east and west,
Frae Indus to Savannah!
Gie me within my straining grasp
The melting form of Anna.

There I'll despise imperial charms,
 An Empress or Sultana,
 While dying raptures in her arms
 I give and take with Anna!

Awa, thou flaunting god o' day!
 Awa, thou pale Diana!
 Ilk star, gae hide thy twinkling ray
 When I'm to meet my Anna.
 Come, in thy raven plumage, night!
 (Sun, moon, and stars withdrawn a')
 And bring an angel pen to write
 My transports wi' my Anna!

Each, go

(Postscript)

The kirk and state may join, and tell
 To do such things I mauna:
 The kirk and state may gae to hell,
 And I'll gae to my Anna.
 She is the sunshine o' my ee,
 To live but her I canna;
 Had I on earth but wishes three,
 The first should be my Anna.

must not

without

Nothing could be more hopeless than to attempt to classify Burns's songs according to the amours that occasioned them, and to seek to find a constant relation between the reality and intensity of the passion and the vitality of the poetry. At times some relation does seem apparent, as we

may discern beneath the vigor of the song just quoted a trace of a conscious attempt to brave his conscience in connection with the one proved infidelity to Jean after his marriage. Again, in such songs as *Of a' the Airts, Poortith Cauld*, and others addressed to Jean herself, we have an expression of his less than rapturous but entirely genuine affection for his wife.

OF A' THE AIRTS

directions

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,

I dearly like the west,

For there the bonnie lassie lives,

love

The lassie I lo'e best:

roll

There wild woods grow, and rivers row,

And mony a hill between;

But day and night my fancy's flight

Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,

I see her sweet and fair:

I hear her in the tunefu' birds,

I hear her charm the air:

There's not a bonnie flower that springs

woodland

By fountain, shaw, or green;

There's not a bonnie bird that sings,

But minds me o' my Jean.

O THIS IS NO MY AIN LASSIE

O this is no my ain lassie,
 Fair tho' the lassie be;
 O weel ken I my ain lassie,
 Kind love is in her e'e.

I see a form, I see a face,
 Ye weel may wi' the fairest place:
 It wants, to me, the witching grace,
 The kind love that's in her e'e.

She's bonnie, blooming, straight, and tall,
 And lang has had my heart in thrall;
 And aye it charms my very saul,
 The kind love that's in her e'e.

soul

A thief sae pawkie is my Jean,
 To steal a blink, by a' unseen;
 But gleg as light are lovers' e'en,
 When kind love is in the e'e.

sly

glance

nimble, eyes

It may escape the courtly sparks,
 It may escape the learned clerks;
 But weel the watching lover marks
 The kind love that's in her e'e.

POORTITH CAULD

O poortith cauld, and restless love,
 Ye wreck my peace between ye;
 Yet poortith a' I could forgive,
 An' 'twere na for my Jeanie.

cold poverty

If 'twere not

such

O why should fate sic pleasure have,
 Life's dearest bands untwining?
 Or why sae sweet a flower as love
 Depend on Fortune's shining?

rest

The world's wealth when I think on,
 Its pride, and a' the lave o't,—
 My curse on silly coward man,
 That he should be the slave o't.

refrain

Her een sae bonnie blue betray
 How she repays my passion;
 But prudence is her o'erword aye,
 She talks of rank and fashion.

O wha can prudence think upon,
 And sic a lassie by him?
 O wha can prudence think upon,
 And sae in love as I am?

goblins
 afraid

How blest the wild-wood Indian's fate!
 He woos his artless dearie—
 The silly bogles, Wealth and State,
 Can never make him eerie.

MY WIFE'S A WINSOME WEE THING

She is a winsome wee thing,
 She is a handsome wee thing,
 She is a lo'esome wee thing,
 This sweet wee wife o' mine.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 109

I never saw a fairer,	
I never lo'ed a dearer,	
And neist my heart I'll wear her,	next
For fear my jewel tine.	be lost

The world's wrack, we share o't,	
The warstle and the care o't;	struggle
Wi' her I'll blythely bear it,	
And think my lot divine.	

Similarly, most of the lyrics addressed to Clarinda in Edinburgh are marked by the sentimentalism and affectation of an affair that engaged only one side, and that among the least pleasing, of the many-sided temperament of the poet.

But, in general, with Burns as with other poets, it was not the catching of a first-hand emotion at white heat that resulted in the best poetry, but the stimulating of his imagination by the vision of a person or a situation that may have had but the hint of a prototype in the actual. We have already noted that the best of the Clarinda poems were written in absence, and that they drop the Arcadian names which typified the make-believe element in that complex affair. So a number of his most charming songs are addressed to girls of whom he had had but a glimpse. But that

glimpse sufficed to kindle him, and for the poetry it was all advantage that it was no more.

His relations with women were extremely varied in nature. At one extreme there were friendships like that with Mrs. Dunlop, the letters to whom show that their common interests were mainly moral and intellectual, and were mingled with no emotion more fiery than gratitude. At the other extreme stand relations like that with Anne Park, the heroine of *Yestreen I had a Pint o' Wine*, which were purely passionate and transitory. Between these come a long procession affording excellent material for the ingenuity of those skilled in the casuistry of the sexes: the boyish flame for Handsome Nell; the slightly more mature feeling for Ellison Begbie; the various phases of his passion for Jean Armour; the perhaps partly factitious reverence for Highland Mary; the respectful adoration for Margaret Chalmers to whom he is supposed to have proposed marriage in Edinburgh; the deliberate posing in his compliments to Chloris (Jean Lorimer); the grateful gallantry to Jessie Lewars, who ministered to him on his deathbed.

In the later days in Dumfries, when his vitality was running low and he was laboring to supply

Thomson with verses even when the spontaneous impulse to compose was rare, we find him theorizing on the necessity of enthroning a goddess for the nonce. Speaking of *Craigieburn-wood* and Jean Lorimer, he writes to his prosaic editor :

“The lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland; and in fact (*entre nous*) is in a manner to me what Sterne’s Eliza was to him—a Mistress, or Friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. (Now, don’t put any of your squinting constructions on this, or have any clishmaclaver about it among our acquaintances.) I assure you that to my lovely Friend you are indebted for many of your best songs of mine. Do you think that the sober gin-horse routine of existence could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos equal to the genius of your Book? No, no!!! Whenever I want to be more than ordinary *in song*; to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs, do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the Divinity of Healing and Poesy

when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in a regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the god-head of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile the divinity of Helicon!"

Burns is here, of course, on his rhetorical high horse, and the songs to Chloris hardly bear him out; but there is much in the passage to enlighten us as to his composing processes. In his younger days his hot blood welcomed every occasion of emotional experience; toward the end, he sought such occasions for the sake of the patriotic task that lightened with its idealism the gathering gloom of his breakdown. But throughout, and this is the important point to note in relating his poetry to his life, his one mode of complimentary address to a woman was in terms of gallantry.

The following group of love songs illustrate the various phases of his temperament which we have been discussing. The first two are to Mary Campbell, and exhibit Burns in his most reverential attitude toward women:

HIGHLAND MARY

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
 The castle o' Montgomery,
 Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
 Your waters never drumlie! muddy
 There Simmer first unfauld her robes, may S. f. unfold
 And there the langest tarry;
 For there I took the last fareweel
 O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk, birch
 How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
 As underneath their fragrant shade
 I clasp'd her to my bosom!
 The golden hours on angel wings
 Flew o'er me and my dearie;
 For dear to me as light and life
 Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow and lock'd embrace
 Our parting was fu' tender;
 And, pledging aft to meet again,
 We tore oursels asunder;
 But oh! fell death's untimely frost,
 That nipt my flower sae early!
 Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay, cold
 That wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
 I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly!
 And closed for aye the sparkling glance,
 That dwelt on me sae kindly!

loved

And mould'ring now in silent dust,
 That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
 But still within my bosom's core
 Shall live my Highland Mary.

TO MARY IN HEAVEN

Thou lingering star, with lessening ray,
 That lov'st to greet the early morn,
 Again thou usherest in the day
 My Mary from my soul was torn.
 O Mary! dear departed shade!
 Where is thy place of blissful rest?
 Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
 Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget?
 Can I forget the hallow'd grove,
 Where by the winding Ayr we met,
 To live one day of parting love?
 Eternity will not efface
 Those records dear of transports past;
 Thy image at our last embrace—
 Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!

Ayr gurgling kiss'd his pebbled shore,
 O'erhung with wild woods, thickening green;
 The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,
 Twin'd amorous round the raptur'd scene.
 The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
 The birds sang love on ev'ry spray,
 Till too, too soon, the glowing west
 Proclaim'd the speed of wingèd day.

Still o'er these scenes my memory wakes,
 And fondly broods with miser care!
 Time but the impression stronger makes,
 As streams their channels deeper wear.
 My Mary, dear departed shade!
 Where is thy place of blissful rest?
 Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
 Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

The group that follow are addressed either to unknown divinities or to girls who inspired only a passing devotion. In the case of *Bonnie Lesley*, there was no question of a love-affair: the song is merely a compliment to a young lady he met and admired. *Auld Rob Morris* is probably purely dramatic.

CA' THE YOWES

(Second Version)

Ca' the yowes to the knowes,	ewes, knolls
Ca' them where the heather grows,	
Ca' them where the burnie rows,	brooklet rolls
My bonnie dearie.	

Hark! the mavis' evening sang	thrush's
Sounding Clouden's woods amang;	
Then a-faulding let us gang,	a-folding, go
My bonnie dearie.	

go

We'll gae down by Clouden side,
 Thro' the hazels, spreading wide
 O'er the waves that sweetly glide
 To the moon sae clearly.

Yonder Clouden's silent towers,
 Where at moonshine's midnight hours,
 O'er the dewy bending flowers,
 Fairies dance sae cheery.

Ghost, goblin

Ghaist nor bogle shalt thou fear;
 Thou'rt to Love and Heaven sae dear,
 Nought
 Nocht of ill may come thee near,
 My bonnie dearie.

Nought

stolen

Fair and lovely as thou art,
 Thou hast stown my very heart;
 I can die—but canna part,
 My bonnie dearie.

AFTON WATER

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
 Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
 My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
 Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen
 Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
 Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear,
 I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 117

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighbouring hills,
Far mark'd with the courses of clear winding rills;
There daily I wander as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow;
There oft as mild Ev'ning weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me. birch

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As gathering sweet flow'rets she stems thy clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

THE BLUE-EYED LASSIE

I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen,	went, road last
A gate, I fear, I'll dearly rue;	night
I gat my death frae twa sweet een,	got, eyes
Twa lovely een o' bonnie blue.	
'Twas not her golden ringlets bright,	
Her lips like roses wat wi' dew,	wet
Her heaving bosom lily-white;	
It was her een sae bonnie blue.	

beguiled

pang

from

perhaps

death

She talk'd, she smil'd, my heart she wyl'd,
 She charm'd my soul I wist na how;
 And aye the stound, the deadly wound,
 Came frae her een sae bonnie blue.
 But 'spare to speak, and spare to speed'—
 She'll aiblins listen to my vow:
 Should she refuse, I'll lay my dead
 To her twa een sae bonnie blue.

BONNIE LESLEY

went

O saw ye bonnie Lesley
 As she gaed o'er the border?
 She's gane, like Alexander,
 To spread her conquests farther.

To see her is to love her.
 And love but her for ever;
 For Nature made her what she is,
 And never made anither!

Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
 Thy subjects, we before thee:
 Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
 The hearts o' men adore thee.

harm

The Deil he could na scaith thee,
 Or aught that wad belang thee;
 He'd look into thy bonnie face,
 And say, 'I canna wrang thee.'

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 119

The Powers aboon will tent thee ;	above, guard
Misfortune sha'na steer thee ;	shall not disturb
Thou'rt like themselves sae lovely,	
That ill they'll ne'er let near thee.	

Return again, fair Lesley,	
Return to Caledonie !	
That we may brag we hae a lass	
There's nane again sae bonnie.	no other

LASSIE WI' THE LINT-WHITE LOCKS

Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,	flaxen
Bonnie lassie, artless lassie,	
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks?	watch
Wilt thou be my dearie, O?	

Now nature cleeds the flowery lea,	clothes
And a' is young and sweet like thee ;	
O wilt thou share its joys wi' me,	
And say thou'lt be my dearie, O.	

The primrose bank, the wimpling burn,	winding
The cuckoo on the milk-white thorn,	
The wanton lambs at early morn	
Shall welcome thee, my dearie, O.	

And when the welcome simmer-shower	
Has cheer'd ilk drooping little flower,	every
We'll to the breathing woodbine bower	
At sultry noon, my dearie, O.	

reaper's

When Cynthia lights, wi' silver ray,
 The weary shearer's hameward way,
 Thro' yellow waving fields we'll stray,
 And talk o' love, my dearie, O.

And when the howling wintry blast
 Disturbs my lassie's midnight rest;
 Enclaspèd to my faithfu' breast,
 I'll comfort thee, my dearie, O.

MONTGOMERIE'S PEGGY

Altho' my bed were in yon muir,
 Amang the heather, in my plaidie,
 Yet happy, happy would I be,
 Had I my dear Montgomerie's Peggy.

When o'er the hill beat surly storms,
 And winter nights were dark and rainy,
 I'd seek some dell, and in my arms
 I'd shelter dear Montgomerie's Peggy.

it would give

Were I a Baron proud and high,
 And horse and servants waiting ready,
 Then a' 't wad gie o' joy to me,
 The sharin't wi' Montgomerie's Peggy.

THE LEA-RIG

 folding-
 oxen
 dull

When o'er the hill the eastern star
 Tells bughtin-time is near, my jo;
 And owsen frae the furrow'd field
 Return sae dowf and wearie O;

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 121

Down by the burn, where scented birks	
Wi' dew are hanging clear, my jo,	sweetheart
I'll meet thee on the lea-rig,	grassy ridge
My ain kind dearie O.	own

In mirkest glen, at midnight hour,	darkest
I'd rove, and ne'er be eerie O,	scared
If thro' that glen I gaed to thee,	went
My ain kind dearie O.	
Altho' the night were ne'er sae wild,	
And I were ne'er sae wearie O,	
I'd meet thee on the lea-rig,	
My ain kind dearie O.	

The hunter lo'es the morning sun,	loves
To rouse the mountain deer, my jo;	
At noon the fisher takes the glen,	
Along the burn to steer, my jo;	
Gie me the hour o' gloamin grey	twilight
It maks my heart sae cheery O,	
To meet thee on the lea-rig,	
My ain kind dearie O.	

AULD ROB MORRIS

There's auld Rob Morris that wons in yon glen,	dwells
He's the king o' gude fellows and wale of auld men;	pick
He has gowd in his coffers, he has owsen and kine,	gold, oxen
And ae bonnie lassie, his dautie and mine.	one, darling

She's fresh as the morning, the fairest in May;
 She's sweet as the ev'ning among the new hay;
 As blythe and as artless as the lambs on the lea,
 And dear to my heart as the light to my e'e.

garden But oh! she's an heiress, auld Robin's a laird,
must not And my daddie has nought but a cot-house and yard;
death A wooer like me maunna hope to come speed,
 The wounds I must hide that will soon be my dead.

 The day comes to me, but delight brings me nane;
 The night comes to me, but my rest it is gane;
alone, ghost I wander my lane, like a night-troubled ghaist,
 And I sigh as my heart it wad burst in my breast.

 O had she but been of a lower degree,
 I then might hae hoped she wad smiled upon me;
describing O how past describing had then been my bliss,
 As now my distraction no words can express!

O, Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast, besides being one of the most exquisite of his songs, has a pathetic interest from the circumstances under which it was composed. During the last few months of his life, a young girl called Jessie Le-wars, sister of one of his colleagues in the excise, came much to his house and was of great service to Mrs. Burns and him in his last illness. One day he offered to write new verses to any tune she might play him. She sat down and played over several times the melody of an old song, beginning,

The robin came to the wren's nest,
And keekit in, and keekit in.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 123

The following lines were the characteristic result :

O, WERT THOU IN THE CAULD BLAST

O, wert thou in the cauld blast,	cold
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,	
My plaidie to the angry airt, .	direction
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee.	
Or did misfortune's bitter storms	
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,	
Thy bield should be my bosom,	shelter
To share it a', to share it a'.	

Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,
The desert were a paradise,
If thou wert there, if thou wert there.
Or were I monarch o' the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

This group may well close with his great hymn of general allegiance to the sex.

GREEN GROW THE RASHES

Green grow the rashes, O,
Green grow the rashes, O;
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
Are spent amang the lasses, O!

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
 In ev'ry hour that passes, O;
 What signifies the life o' man,
 An' 'twere na for the lasses, O.

worldly

The warly race may riches chase,
 An' riches still may fly them, O;
 An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
 Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.

quiet

But gie me a canny hour at e'en,
 My arms about my dearie, O;
 An' warly cares, an' warly men,

upside-down

May a' gae tapsalteerie, O!

sedate

For you sae douce, ye sneer at this,
 Ye're nought but senseless asses, O;
 The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
 He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
 Her noblest work she classes, O;
 Her prentice han' she tried on man,
 An' then she made the lasses, O.

Equally personal, but not connected with love, are a few autobiographical poems of which the following are typical. The third of these, though prosaic enough, is interesting as perhaps Burns's most elaborate summing up of the philosophy of his own career.

THERE WAS A LAD

There was a lad was born in Kyle,	
But whatna day o' whatna style	what
I doubt it's hardly worth the while	
To be sae nice wi' Robin.	

Robin was a rovin' boy,	roystering
Rantin' rovin', rantin' rovin';	
Robin was a rovin' boy,	
Rantin' rovin' Robin.	

Our monarch's hindmost year but ane	one
Was five-and-twenty days begun,	
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar win'	
Blew hansom in on Robin.	his first gift

The gossip keekit in his loof,	peeped, palm
Quo' scho, 'Wha lives will see the proof,	Quoth she
This waly boy will be nae coof,	choice, dolt
I think we'll ca' him Robin.	call

'He'll hae misfortunes great an' sma',	
But aye a heart aboon them a';	above
He'll be a credit till us a',	to
We'll a' be proud o' Robin.	

'But sure as three times three mak nine,	
I see by ilka score and line,	each
This chap will dearly like our kin',	sex
So leeze me on thee, Robin.	blessings on

sir	‘Guid faith,’ quo’ scho, ‘I doubt you, stir,
make, aspread	Ye gar the lasses lie aspar,
faults, worse	But twenty fauts ye may hae waur, So blessings on thee, Robin!’

CONTENTED WI’ LITTLE

cheerful	Contented wi’ little, and cantie wi’ mair,
meet	Whene’er I forgather wi’ Sorrow and Care,
spank	I gie them a skelp, as they’re creepin’ alang,
bowl of good ale	Wi’ a cog o’ gude swats, and an auld Scottish sang.
sometimes	I whyles claw the elbow o’ troublesome thought;
soldier, fight	But man is a soger, and life is a faught:
pocket	My mirth and gude humour are coin in my pouch,
dare	And my freedom’s my lairdship nae monarch daur touch.
twelvemonth, lot	A towmond o’ trouble, should that be my fa’,
soldiers	A night o’ gude fellowship sowthers it a’; When at the blythe end of our journey at last,
Who the devil	Wha the deil ever thinks o’ the road he has past?
stumble, stagger	Blind Chance, let her snapper and stoyte on her way, Be’t to me, be’t frae me, e’en let the jad gae: Come ease or come travail, come pleasure or pain, My warst word is—‘Welcome, and welcome again!’

MY FATHER WAS A FARMER

My Father was a Farmer upon the Carrick border, O,
 And carefully he bred me in decency and order, O;
 He bade me act a manly part, though I had ne’er a far-
 thing, O,
 For without an honest manly heart, no man was worth
 regarding, O.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 127

Then out into the world my course I did determine, O;
Tho' to be rich was not my wish, yet to be great was
charming, O;

My talents they were not the worst, nor yet my education,
O;

Resolv'd was I, at least to try, to mend my situation, O.

In many a way, and vain essay, I courted Fortune's favour,
O;

Some cause unseen still stept between to frustrate each
endeavour, O;

Sometimes by foes I was o'erpower'd, sometimes by
friends forsaken, O;

And when my hope was at the top, I still was worst mistaken,
O.

Then sore harass'd, and tir'd at last, with Fortune's vain
delusion, O,

I dropt my schemes, like idle dreams, and came to this
conclusion, O—

The past was bad, and the future hid; its good or ill un-
trièd, O;

But the present hour was in my pow'r, and so I would
enjoy it, O.

No help, nor hope, nor view had I, nor person to be-
friend me, O;

So I must toil, and sweat and broil, and labour to sus-
tain me, O;

To plough and sow, to reap and mow, my father bred me
early, O;

For one, he said, to labour bred, was a match for For-
tune fairly, O.

Thus all obscure, unknown, and poor, thro' life I'm
doom'd to wander, O,
Till down my weary bones I lay in everlasting slumber, O;
No view nor care, but shun whate'er might breed me pain
or sorrow, O,
I live to-day as well's I may, regardless of to-morrow, O.

But cheerful still, I am as well as a monarch in a palace, O.
Tho' Fortune's frown still hunts me down, with all her
wonted malice, O;
I make indeed my daily bread, but ne'er can make it farther, O;
But, as daily bread is all I need, I do not much regard
her, O.

When sometimes by my labour I earn a little money, O,
Some unforeseen misfortune comes generally upon me, O—
Mischance, mistake, or by neglect, or my good-natur'd
folly, O;
But come what will, I've sworn it still, I'll ne'er be melancholy, O.

All you who follow wealth and power with unremitting
ardour, O,
The more in this you look for bliss, you leave your view
the farther, O;
Had you the wealth Potosi boasts, or nations to adore
you, O,
A cheerful honest-hearted clown I will prefer before you, O.

The stress laid upon that part of Burns's production which has relation, near or remote, to

his personal experiences with women is, in the current estimate, somewhat disproportionate. A surprisingly large number of his most effective songs are purely dramatic, are placed in the mouth of a man who is clearly not the poet, or, more frequently, in the mouth of a woman. There is little evidence that Burns would have been capable of sustained dramatic composition; on the other hand, he was far from being limited to purely personal lyric utterance. His versatility in giving expression to the amorous moods of the other sex is almost as great as in direct confession. A group of these dramatic lyrics will demonstrate this.

O FOR ANE AN' TWENTY, TAM!

An' O for ane an' twenty, Tam!

An' hey, sweet ane an' twenty, Tam!

I'll learn my kin a rattlin' sang,

teach

An' I saw ane an' twenty, Tam.

If

They snool me sair, and haud me down,

snub, sorely, hold

An' gar me look like bluntie, Tam!

make, a fool

But three short years will soon wheel roun',

An' then comes ane an' twenty, Tam.

portion, handful
of money

ask

A gleib o' lan', a claut o' gear,
Was left me by my auntie, Tam;
At kith or kin I need na spier,¹
An' I saw ane and twenty, Tam.

have, dolt

hand

They'll hae me wed a wealthy coof,
Tho' I mysel' hae plenty, Tam;
But hear'st thou, laddie? there's my loof,
I'm thine at ane and twenty, Tam!

YE BANKS AND BRAES

(Second Version)

Ye flowery banks o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye blume sae fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu' o' care?

remindest

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
That sings upon the bough;
Thou minds me o' the happy days,
When my fause luvè was true.

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
That sings beside thy mate;
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,
And wist na o' my fate.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon,
To see the wood-bine twine,
And ilka bird sang o' its love,
And sae did I o' mine.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 131

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
Frae off its thorny tree:
But my fause luvver staw my rose, stole
And left the thorn wi' me.

(Third Version)

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary fu' o' care?
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons thro' the flowering thorn;
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed never to return.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its love,
And fondly sae did I o' mine.
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;
And my fause lover staw my rose, stole
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

SIMMER'S A PLEASANT TIME

Simmer's a pleasant time,
Flow'rs of ev'ry colour;
The water rins o'er the heugh, crag
And I long for my true lover.

waking

Ay waukin O,
 Waukin still and wearie:
 Sleep I can get nane
 For thinking on my dearie.

superstitiously
afraid

When I sleep I dream,
 When I wauk I'm eerie;
 Sleep I can get nane
 For thinking on my dearie.

rest

Lanely night comes on,
 A' the lave are sleeping;
 I think on my bonnie lad
 And I bleer my een with greetin'.

eyes, weeping

WHISTLE, AND I'LL COME TO YE, MY LAD

O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
 O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad:
 Tho' father and mither and a' should gae mad,
 O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad.

take care
gate, ajar
then

But warily tent, when ye come to court me,
 And come na unless the back-yett be a-jee;
 Syne up the back-stile, and let naebody see,
 And come as ye were na comin' to me.
 And come as ye were na comin' to me.

Go, fly
glance

At kirk, or at market, whene'er ye meet me,
 Gang by me as tho' that ye car'd na a flee:
 But steal me a blink o' your bonnie black e'e,
 Yet look as ye were na lookin' at me.
 Yet look as ye were na lookin' at me.

Aye vow and protest that ye care na for me,	
And whiles ye may lightly my beauty a wee;	slight
But court na anither, tho' jokin' ye be,	
For fear that she wyle your fancy frae me.	beguile
For fear that she wyle your fancy frae me.	

TAM GLEN

My heart is a breaking, dear tittie,	sister
Some counsel unto me come len',	
To anger them a' is a pity;	
But what will I do wi' Tam Glen?	
I'm thinking, wi' sic a braw fellow,	fine
In poortith I might mak a fen';	poverty, shift
What care I in riches to wallow,	
If I maunna marry Tam Glen?	must not
There's Lowrie the laird o' Dumeller,	
'Guid-day to you'—brute! he comes ben:	
He brags and he blaws o' his siller,	money
But when will he dance like Tam Glen?	
My minnie does constantly deave me,	mother, deafen
And bids me beware o' young men;	
They flatter, she says, to deceive me;	
But wha can think sae o' Tam Glen?	
My daddie says, gin I'll forsake him,	if
He'll gie me guid hunder marks ten:	hundred
But, if it's ordain'd I maun take him,	
O wha will I get but Tam Glen?	

Last night
mouth gave a leap

Yestreen at the Valentine's dealing,
My heart to my mou gied a sten:
For thrice I drew ane without failing,
And thrice it was written, 'Tam Glen.'

watching
drenched chemise-
trousers

The last Halloween I was waukin'
My droukit sark-sleeve,¹ as ye ken;
His likeness cam up the house stalkin'—
And the very grey breeks o' Tam Glen!

give
If
love

Come, counsel, dear tittie, don't tarry;
I'll gie you my bonnie black hen,
Gif ye will advise me to marry
The lad I lo'e dearly, Tam Glen.

THE RANTIN' DOG THE DADDIE O'T

baby-clothes
care for
of it

O wha my babie-clouts will buy?
Wha will tent me when I cry?
Wha will kiss me whare I lie?—
The rantin' dog the daddie o't.

fault
ale for the mid-
wife
name it

Wha will own he did the faut?
Wha will buy my groanin' maut?
Wha will tell me how to ca't?
The rantin' dog the daddie o't.

stool of repent-
ance
Give

When I mount the creepie-chair,
Wha will sit beside me there?
Gie me Rob, I seek nae mair,—
The rantin' dog the daddie o't.

¹ See note 14 on Halloween, p. 218.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 135

Wha will crack to me my lane?
 Wha will mak me fidgin' fain?
 Wha will kiss me o'er again?—
 The rantin' dog the daddie o't.

chat, alone
 tingling with
 fondness

LAST MAY A BRAW WOOER

Last May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,
 And sair wi' his love he did deave me :
 I said there was naething I hated like men—
 The deuce gae wi'm to believe me, believe me,
 The deuce gae wi'm to believe me.

fine
 sorely, deafen

go with him

He spak o' the darts in my bonnie black een,
 And vow'd for my love he was dying ;
 I said he might die when he liked for Jean :
 The Lord forgie me for lying, for lying,
 The Lord forgie me for lying !

A weel-stockèd mailen, himsel' for the laird,
 And marriage aff-hand, were his proffers :
 I never loot on that I kend it, or car'd ;
 But thought I might hae waur offers, waur offers,
 But thought I might hae waur offers.

farm

admitted

worse

But what wad ye think? In a fortnight or less,
 The deil tak his taste to gae near her !
 He up the lang loan to my black cousin Bess,
 Guess ye how, the jad ! I could bear her, could bear her,
 Guess ye how, the jad ! I could bear her.

devil

lane

next, fretted
fair

But a' the niest week as I petted wi' care,
I gaed to the tryst o' Dalgarnock;
And wha but my fine fickle lover was there?
I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock, a warlock,
I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock.

shoulder, gave,
glance

But owre my left shouther I gae him a blink,
Lest neebors might say I was saucy;
My wooer he caper'd as he'd been in drink,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie, dear lassie,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie.

asked, kindly
If
shoes, ill-shaped

I spier'd for my cousin fu' couthy and sweet,
Gin she had recover'd her hearin',
And how her new shoon fit her auld shachl't feet—
But, heavens! how he fell a swearin' a swearin'.
But, heavens! how he fell a swearin'.

must

He begged for gudesake I wad be his wife,
Or else I wad kill him wi' sorrow:
So e'en to preserve the poor body in life,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow, to-morrow,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow.

FOR THE SAKE O' SOMEBODY

sore

My heart is sair, I dare na tell,
My heart is sair for somebody;
I could wake a winter night,
For the sake o' somebody!
Oh-hon! for somebody!
Oh-hey! for somebody!
I could range the world around,
For the sake o' somebody.

Ye powers that smile on virtuous love,
 O, sweetly smile on somebody!
 Frae ilka danger keep him free, every
 And send me safe my somebody.
 Oh-hon! for somebody!
 Oh-hey! for somebody!
 I wad do—what wad I not?
 For the sake o' somebody!

OPEN THE DOOR TO ME, O!

Oh, open the door, some pity to shew,
 Oh, open the door to me, O!
 Tho' thou hast been false, I'll ever prove true,
 Oh, open the door to me, O!

Could is the blast upon my pale cheek,
 But caulder thy love for me, O!
 The frost, that freezes the life at my heart,
 Is nought to my pains frae thee, O!

The wan moon is setting behind the white wave,
 And time is setting with me, O!
 False friends, false love, farewell! for mair
 I'll ne'er trouble them nor thee, O!

She has open'd the door, she has open'd it wide;
 She sees his pale corse on the plain, O!
 'My true love!' she cried, and sank down by his side,
 Never to rise again, O!

WANDERING WILLIE

away Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
 hold Here awa, there awa, haud awa hame;
 one Come to my bosom, my ae only dearie,
 Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

Loud tho' the winter blew cauld at our parting,
 'Twas na the blast brought the tear in my e'e;
 Welcome now, Simmer, and welcome, my Willie,
 The Simmer to Nature, my Willie to me!

Awake Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave o' your slumbers
 once more How your dread howling a lover alarms!
 Wauken, ye breezes, row gently, ye billows,
 And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

own But oh, if he's faithless, and minds na his Nannie,
 Flow still between us, thou wide-roaring main;
 May I never see it, may I never trow it,
 But, dying, believe that my Willie's my ain!

HOW LANG AND DREARY

How lang and dreary is the night,
 When I am frae my dearie!
 I restless lie frae e'en to morn,
 Tho' I were ne'er sae weary.

fearful For O, her lanely nights are lang;
 sore And O, her dreams are eerie;
 And O, her widow'd heart is sair,
 That's absent frae her dearie.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 139

When I think on the lightsome days
I spent wi' thee, my dearie,
And now that seas between us roar,
How can I be but eerie!

How slow ye move, ye heavy hours;
The joyless day how drearie!
It wasna sae ye glinted by,
When I was wi' my dearie.

glanced

THE BONNIE LAD THAT'S FAR AWA

O how can I be blithe and glad,
Or how can I gang brisk and braw,
When the bonnie lad that I lo'e best
Is o'er the hills and far awa?

go, fine

It's no the frosty winter wind,
It's no the driving drift and snaw;
But aye the tear comes in my e'e,
To think on him that's far awa.

My father pat me frae his door,
My friends they hae disown'd me a':
But I hae ane will tak my part,
The bonnie lad that's far awa.

put

have one

A pair o' gloves he bought to me,
And silken snoods he gae me twa;
And I will wear them for his sake,
The bonnie lad that's far awa.

fillets, gave

clothe, birch
woods

O weary winter soon will pass,
And spring will clead the birken shaw:
And my young babie will be born,
And he'll be hame that's far awa.

BRAW BRAW LADS

hills

woods

Braw braw lads on Yarrow braes,
That wander thro' the blooming heather;
But Yarrow braes nor Ettrick shaws
Can match the lads o' Gala Water.

love

But there is ane, a secret ane,
Aboon them a' I lo'e him better;
And I'll be his, and he'll be mine,
The bonnie lad o' Gala Water.

landlord

much dowry

watch

Altho' his daddie was nae laird,
And tho' I hae nae meikle tocher,
Yet rich in kindest, truest love,
We'll tent our flocks by Gala Water.

bought

It ne'er was wealth, it ne'er was wealth,
That coft contentment, peace, and pleasure;
The bands and bliss o' mutual love, -
O that's the chiefest world's treasure!

MY HEART'S IN THE HIGHLANDS

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;
A-chasing the wild deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 141

Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,
The birth-place of valour, the country of worth;
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.

Farewell to the mountains, high cover'd with snow;
Farewell to the straths and green valleys below;
Farewell to the forests and wild-hanging woods;
Farewell to the torrents and loud-pouring floods.

The foregoing are all placed in the mouths of girls, and it is difficult to deny that they ring as true as the songs that are known to have sprung from the poet's direct experience. Scarcely less notable than their sincerity is their variety. Pathos of desertion, gay defiance of opposition, yearning in absence, confession of coquetry, joyous confession of affection returned—these are only a few of the phases of woman's love rendered here with a felicity that leaves nothing to be desired. What woman has so interpreted the feelings of her sex?

The next two express a girl's repugnance at the thought of marriage with an old man; and the two following form a pair treating the same theme, one from the girl's point of view, the other from the lover's. The later verses of *My Love She's but a Lassie Yet*, however, though

full of vivacity, have so little to do with the first or with one another that the song seems to be a collection of scraps held together by a common melody.

WHAT CAN A YOUNG LASSIE

mother
money

What can a young lassie, what shall a young lassie,
What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man?
Bad luck on the penny that tempted my minnie
To sell her poor Jenny for siller an' lan'!

coughs, limps
stupid, benumbed

He's always compleenin' frae mornin' to e'enin',
He hoasts and he hirples the weary day lang:
He's doylt and he's dozin, his bluid it is frozen,
O, dreary's the night wi' a crazy auld man!

woe

He hums and he hankers, he frets and he cankers,
I never can please him do a' that I can;
He's peevish, and jealous of a' the young fellows:
O, dool on the day I met wi' an auld man!

My auld auntie Katie upon me takes pity,
I'll do my endeavour to follow her plan;
I'll cross him and rack him, until I heart-break him,
And then his auld brass will buy me a new pan.

TO DAUNTON ME

tame

The blude-red rose at Yule may blaw,
The simmer lilies bloom in snaw,
The frost may freeze the deepest sea;
But an auld man shall never daunt me.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 143

To daunton me, and me sae young,	
Wi' his fause heart and flatt'ring tongue,	false
That is the thing you ne'er shall see;	
For an auld man shall never daunton me.	

For a' his meal and a' his mant,	malt
For a' his fresh beef and his saut,	salt
For a' his gold and white monie,	
An auld man shall never daunton me.	

His gear may buy him kye and yowes,	wealth, cows,
His gear may buy him glens and knowes;	ewes
But me he shall not buy nor fee,	knolls
For an auld man shall never daunton me.	hire

He hirples twa fauld as he dow,	limps double, can
Wi' his toothless gab and his auld beld pow,	mouth, bald head
And the rain rains down frae his red bleer'd e'e—	
That auld man shall never daunton me.	

I'M OWRE YOUNG TO MARRY YET

I am my mammie's ae bairn,	only child
Wi' unco folk I weary, Sir;	strange
And lying in a man's bed,	
I'm fley'd wad mak me eerie, Sir.	frightened, scared

I'm owre young, I'm owre young,	too
I'm owre young to marry yet;	
I'm owre young, 'twad be a sin	
To tak me frae my mammie yet.	

bought
must

[My mammie coft me a new gown,
The kirk maun hae the gracing o't;
Were I to lie wi' you, kind Sir,
I'm fear'd ye'd spoil the lacing o't.]

Hallowmas is come and gane,
The nights are lang in winter, Sir;
And you an' I in ae bed,
In troth I dare na venture, Sir.

timber
way
older, by

Fu' loud and shrill the frosty wind
Blaws thro' the leafless timmer, Sir;
But if ye come this gate again,
I'll aulder be gin simmer, Sir.

MY LOVE SHE'S BUT A LASSIE YET

My love she's but a lassie yet;
My love she's but a lassie yet;
We'll let her stand a year or twa,
She'll no be half sae saucy yet.

I rue the day I sought her, O,
I rue the day I sought her, O;
Wha gets her needs na say he's woo'd,
But he may say he's bought her, O!

Go

Come, draw a drap o' the best o't yet;
Come, draw a drap o' the best o't yet;
Gae seek for pleasure where ye will,
But here I never miss'd it yet.

[We're a' dry wi' drinking o't;
 We're a' dry wi' drinking o't;
 The minister kiss'd the fiddler's wife,
 An' could na preach for thinkin' o't.]

Bessy and Her Spinnin'-Wheel stands by itself as the rendering of the mood of contented solitude, and is further remarkable for its charming verses of natural description. *John Anderson My Jo* is the classical expression of love in age, inimitable in its simplicity and tenderness. The two following poems supply a humorous contrast.

BESSY AND HER SPINNIN'-WHEEL

O leeze me on my spinnin'-wheel,	Blessings on
O leeze me on my rock and reel;	distaff
Frae tap to tae that cleeds me bien,	top to toe, clothes,
And haps me fiel and warm at e'en!	comfortably
I'll set me down and sing and spin,	wraps, well
While laigh descends the simmer sun,	low
Blest wi' content, and milk and meal—	
O leeze me on my spinnin'-wheel.	
On ilka hand the burnies trot,	every, brooklets
And meet below my theekit cot;	thatched
The scented birk and hawthorn white	birch
Across the pool their arms unite,	
Alike to screen the birdie's nest,	
And little fishes' caller rest:	cool
The sun blinks kindly in the biel',	shelter
Where blythe I turn my spinnin'-wheel.	

oaks, pigeons
repeats, doleful
linnets

corn-crake, clover
partridge, meadow
dodging, cot

Above

noisy

On lofty aiks the cushats wail,
And Echo cons the doolfu' tale;
The lintwhites in the hazel braes,
Delighted, rival ither's lays:
The craik amang the claver hay,
The paitrick whirrin' o'er the ley,
The swallow jinkin' round my shiel
Amuse me at my spinnin'-wheel.

Wi' sma' to sell, and less to buy,
Aboon distress, below envy,
O wha wad leave this humble state,
For a' the pride of a' the great?
Amid their flaring, idle toys,
Amid their cumbrous, dinsome joys,
Can they the peace and pleasure feel
Of Bessy at her spinnin'-wheel?

JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO

sweetheart

straight
bald

head

jolly

John Anderson my jo, John,
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonnie brow was brent;
But now your brow is beld, John,
Your locks are like the snaw;
But blessings on your frosty pow,
John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither;
And mony a canty day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither:

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 147

Now we maun totter down, John,	must
And hand in hand we'll go,	
And sleep thegither at the foot,	together
John Anderson, my jo.	

THE WEARY PUND O' TOW

The weary pund, the weary pund,	pound
The weary pund o' tow;	yarn
I think my wife will end her life	
Before she spin her tow.	

I bought my wife a stane o' lint	stone, flax
As gude as e'er did grow;	good
And a' that she has made o' that,	
Is ae poor pund o' tow.	one

There sat a bottle in a bole,	niche
Beyond the ingle lowe,	chimney flame
And aye she took the tither souk	other suck
To drouk the stowrie tow.	drench, dusty

Quoth I, 'For shame, ye dirty dame,	
Gae spin your tap o' tow!'	bunch
She took the rock, and wi' a knock	distaff
She brak it o'er my pow.	pate

At last her feet—I sang to see't—	
Gaed foremost o'er the knowe;	went, hill
And or I wad anither jad,	ere, wed
I'll wallop in a tow.	kick, rope

O MERRY HAE I BEEN

huckling-comb	O, merry hae I been teethin' a heckle, An' merry hae I been shapin' a spoon;
patching	O, merry hae I been cloutin' a kettle, An' kissin' my Katie when a' was done.
knock with	O, a' the lang day I ca' at my hammer, An' a' the lang day I whistle and sing,
mistress	O, a' the lang night I cuddle my kimmer, An' a' the lang night am as happy's a king.

sorrow, earnings	Bitter in dool I lickit my winnins O' marrying Bess, to gie her a slave:
shroud	Bless'd be the hour she cool'd in her linens, And blythe be the bird that sings on her grave. Come to my arms, my Katie, my Katie, An' come to my arms, an' kiss me again! Drucken or sober, here's to thee, Katie! And bless'd be the day I did it again.

Had I the Wyte is, we may hope, also purely imaginative drama; it is certainly vividly imagined and carried through with a delightful mixture of sympathy and humorous detachment.

HAD I THE WYTE?

blame	Had I the wyte, had I the wyte, Had I the wyte? she bade me!
highroad	She watch'd me by the hie-gate side,
lane	And up the loan she shaw'd me;

And when I wadna venture in, A coward loon she ca'd me: Had kirk and state been in the gate, I lighted when she bade me.	rascal way (opposing)
Sae craftilie she took me ben, And bade me make nae clatter; 'For our ramgunshoch glum gudeman Is o'er ayont the water:' Whae'er shall say I wanted grace, When I did kiss and daut her, Let him be planted in my place, Syne say I was the fautor.	in surlly beyond pet Then, transgressor
Could I for shame, could I for shame, Could I for shame refused her? And wadna manhood been to blame, Had I unkindly used her? He clawed her wi' the ripplin-kame, And blae and bluidy bruised her; When sic a husband was frae hame, What wife but had excused her?	wool-comb blue
I dightet ay her een sae blue, And bann'd the cruel randy; And weel I wat her willing mou' Was e'en like sugar-candy. At gloamin-shot it was, I trow, I lighted, on the Monday; But I cam through the Tysday's dew, To wanton Willie's brandy.	wiped, eyes cursed, scoundrel wot, mouth sunset Tuesday's

Macpherson's Farewell, made famous by Carlyle's appreciation, is a glorified version of the "Dying Words" of a condemned bandit, such as were familiar in broadsides after every notorious execution. Part of the refrain is old. One may imagine *The Highland Balou* the lullaby of Macpherson's child.

MACPHERSON'S FAREWELL

Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong,
The wretch's destinie!
Macpherson's time will not be long
On yonder gallows tree.

jovially

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he;

lively tune

He played a spring and danced it round,
Below the gallows tree.

Oh, what is death but parting breath?
On mony a bloody plain
I've dared his face, and in his place
I scorn him yet again!

Untie these bands from off my hands,
And bring to me my sword,
And there's no a man in all Scotland,
But I'll brave him at a word.

trouble

I've lived a life of sturt and strife;
I die by treacherie:
It burns my heart I must depart
And not avengèd be.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 151

Now farewell light, thou sunshine bright,
 And all beneath the sky!
 May coward shame distain his name,
 The wretch that dares not die!

THE HIGHLAND BALOU

Hee balou! my sweet wee Donald,	Lullaby
Picture o' the great Clanronald;	
Brawlie kens our wanton chief	Finely knows
Wha got my young Highland thief.	

Leeze me on thy bonnie craigie!	Blessings on,
An thou live, thou'll steal a naigie:	throat
Travel the country thro' and thro',	If, little nag
And bring hame a Carlisle cow.	

Thro' the Lawlands, o'er the border,	
Weel, my babie, may thou furdur:	succeed
Herry the louns o' the laigh countree,	Harry, rascals,
Syne to the Highlands hame to me.	low
	Then

Distinct from either of the foregoing groups are several songs in narrative form, told as a rule from the point of view of an onlooker, but hardly inferior to the others in vitality. In them the personal or dramatic emotion is replaced by a keen sense of the humor of the situation.

DUNCAN GRAY

Duncan Gray came here to woo,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
 drunk On blythe Yule night when we were fou,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 cast, high Maggie coost her head fu' heigh,
 askance, very Look'd asklent and unco skeigh,
 skittish
 Made, aloof Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh;
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

wheedled Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd;
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
 Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Wept, eyes both Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,
 leaping, waterfall Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',
 Spak o' lowpin o'er a linn;
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

 Time and chance are but a tide,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
 sore, endure Slighted love is sair to bide,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 'Shall I, like a fool,' quoth he,
 hussy 'For a haughty hizzie die?
 She may gae to—France for me!
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

 How it comes let doctors tell,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
 whole Meg grew sick as he grew haill,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Something in her bosom wrings,
 For relief a sigh she brings;
 And O, her een they spak sic things! such
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan was a lad o' grace,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
 Maggie's was a piteous case,
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
 Duncan could na be her death,
 Swelling pity smoor'd his wrath; smothered
 Now they're crouse and cantie baith! lively, cheerful
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

DUNCAN DAVISON

There was a lass, they ca'd her Meg, called
 And she held o'er the moors to spin;
 There was a lad that follow'd her,
 They ca'd him Duncan Davison.
 The moor was drieigh, and Meg was skiegh, dull, skittish
 Her favour Duncan could na win;
 For wi' the rock she wad him knock, distaff
 And ay she shook the temper-pin. regulating pin
 the spinning
 wheel
 As o'er the moor they lightly foor, went
 A burn was clear, a glen was green,
 Upon the banks they eased their shanks,
 And aye she set the wheel between:
 But Duncan swore a haly aith, holy oath
 That Meg should be a bride the morn;
 Then Meg took up her spinnin' graith, implements
 And flung them a' out o'er the burn. across

build We will big a wee, wee house,
 And we will live like King and Queen,
 Sae blythe and merry's we will be
 aside When ye set by the wheel at e'en.
 A man may drink and no be drunk;
 A man may fight and no be slain;
 A man may kiss a bonnie lass,
 And aye be welcome back again.

THE DE'IL'S AWA WI' TH' EXCISEMAN

The De'il cam fiddling thro' the town,
 And danced awa wi' th' Exciseman;
 every, Mahomet And ilka wife cried 'Auld Mahoun,
 (Devil) I wish you luck o' your prize, man.

 malt We'll mak our maut, and we'll brew our drink,
 We'll laugh, and sing, and rejoice, man;
 big And mony braw thanks to the muckle black De'il
 That danced awa wi' th' Exciseman.

There's threesome reels, there's foursome reels,
 dance tunes There's hornpipes and strathspeys, man;
 one But the ae best dance e'er cam to the lan',
 Was—*The De'il's awa wi' th' Exciseman.*

COMIN' THROUGH THE RYE

Comin' thro' the rye, poor body,
 Comin' thro' the rye,
 draggled She draigl't a' her petticoatie,
 Comin' thro' the rye.

Gin a body meet a body	If
Comin' thro' the rye;	
Gin a body kiss a body,	
Need a body cry?	

Gin a body meet a body
Comin' thro' the glen;
Gin a body kiss a body,
Need the warld ken?

O, Jenny's a' weet, poor body;	all wet
Jenny's seldom dry;	
She draigl't a' her petticoatie,	
Comin' thro' the rye.	

THE DEUK'S DANG O'ER MY DADDIE

The bairns gat out wi' an unco shout,	children, surpris-
The deuk's dang o'er my daddie, O!	ing
The fient ma care, quo' the feirie auld wife,	duck has knocked
He was but a paidlin body, O!	devil may, lusty
He paidles out, and he paidles in,	tottering creature
An' he paidles late and early, O;	
This seven lang years I hae lien by his side,	
An' he is but a fusionless carlie, O.	pithless old fellow
O, haud your tongue, my feirie auld wife,	hold
O, haud your tongue now, Nansie, O:	
I've seen the day, and sae hae ye,	
Ye wad na been sae donsie, O;	would not have,
I've seen the day ye butter'd my brose,	testy
And cuddl'd me late and earlie, O;	oatmeal and hot
But downa-do's come o'er me now,	water
And, oh, I find it sairly, O!	cannot-do is
	feel it sorely

WHA IS THAT AT MY BOWER DOOR?

	'Wha is that at my bower door?'
	'O wha is it but Findlay?'
go, way, shall not	'Then gae your gate, ye'se nae be here!'
must	'Indeed maun I,' quo' Findlay.
do	'What mak ye, sae like a thief?'
	'O, come and see,' quo' Findlay;
	'Before the morn ye'll work mischief;'
	'Indeed will I,' quo' Findlay.
If	'Gif I rise and let you in—'
	'Let me in,' quo' Findlay—
awake	'Ye'll keep me waukin wi' your din;'
	'Indeed will I,' quo' Findlay.
	'In my bower if ye should stay—'
	'Let me stay,' quo' Findlay—,
	'I fear ye'll bide till break o' day;'
	'Indeed will I,' quo' Findlay.
	'Here this night if ye remain—'
	'I'll remain,' quo' Findlay—,
way	'I dread ye'll learn the gate again;'
	'Indeed will I,' quo' Findlay.
	'What may pass within this bower—'
	'Let it pass,' quo' Findlay—
must	'Ye maun conceal till your last hour;'
	'Indeed will I,' quo' Findlay.

WILLIE'S WIFE

	Willie Wastle dwalt on Tweed,
	The spot they ca'd it Linkumdoddie;
weaver good	Willie was a wabster guid,
have stolen	Cou'd stown a clue wi' ony body.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 157

He had a wife was dour and din,	stubborn, sallow
O, Tinkler Madgie was her mither;	Tinker
Sic a wife as Willie had,	Such
I wad na gie a button for her!	

She has an e'e, she has but ane,	eye
The cat has twa the very colour;	
Five rusty teeth, forbye a stump,	besides
A clapper tongue wad deave a miller;	deafen
A whiskin beard about her mou,	mouth
Her nose and chin they threaten ither;	
Sic a wife as Willie had,	
I wad na gie a button for her!	

She's bow-hough'd, she's hem-shinn'd,	bandy, crooked
Ae limpin leg a hand-breed shorter;	One, hand-breadth
She's twisted right, she's twisted left,	
To balance fair in ilka quarter:	either
She has a hump upon her breast,	
The twin o' that upon her shouther;	
Sic a wife as Willie had,	
I wad na gie a button for her!	

Auld baudrons by the ingle sits,	Old pussy, fireside
An' wi' her loof her face a-washin;	palm
But Willie's wife is nae sae trig,	trim
She dights her grunzie wi' a hushion;	wipes, snout,
Her walie nieves like midden-creels,	stocking-leg
Her face wad fyle the Logan-water;	ample fists, dung
Sic a wife as Willie had,	baskets
I wad na gie a button for her!	dirty

The songs written by Burns in connection with politics are often lively and pointed, but they have little imagination, and the passing of the issues they dealt with has deprived them of general interest. Two classes of exceptions may be noted. He was, as we have seen, sympathetically interested in the French Revolution, and the fundamental doctrine of Liberty, Fraternity, Equality was cast by him into a poem which, he himself said, is "not really poetry," but is admirably vigorous rhetoric in verse, and has become the classic utterance of the democratic faith.

A MAN'S A MAN FOR A' THAT

	Is there for honest poverty
hangs	That hings his head, an' a' that?
	The coward slave, we pass him by,
	We dare be poor for a' that!
	For a' that, an' a' that,
	Our toils obscure, an' a' that;
	The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
gold	The man's the gowd for a' that.
	 What tho' on hamely fare we dine,
coarse gray	Wear hoddin-gray, and a' that;
Give	Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
	A man's a man for a' that.

For a' that, an' a' that,
 Their tinsel show, an' a' that;
 The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
 Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,	fellow
Wha struts, and stares, an' a' that;	
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,	
He's but a coof for a' that:	dolt
For a' that, an' a' that,	
His riband, star, and a' that,	
The man of independent mind,	
He looks and laughs at a' that.	

A prince can mak a belted knight,	
A marquis, duke, an' a' that;	
But an honest man's aboon his might,	above
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that!	must not claim
For a' that, an' a' that,	
Their dignities, an' a' that,	
The pith o' sense an' pride o' worth	
Are higher rank than a' that.	

But let us pray that come it may,	
As come it will for a' that;	
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,	
May bear the gree, an' a' that.	first place
For a' that, an' a' that,	
It's coming yet for a' that,	
That man to man the warld o'er	
Shall brithers be for a' that.	

Another, equally famous, sprang from his patriotic enthusiasm for the heroes of the Scottish war of independence, but was written with more than a slight consciousness of what seemed to him the similarity of the spirit then abroad in France.

SCOTS, WHA HAE

ROBERT BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY, BEFORE
THE BATTLE OF BANNOCKBURN

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,
Welcome to your gory bed
Or to victorie.

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour!
See approach proud Edward's power—
Chains and slaverie!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's King and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or freeman fa'?
Let him follow me!

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 161

By Oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or die!

The other class of exceptions is the group of songs on Jacobite themes. The rebellion led by Prince Charles Edward in 1745 had produced a considerable quantity of campaign verse, almost all without poetic value; but after the turmoil had died down and the Stuart cause was regarded as finally lost, there appeared in Scotland a peculiar sentimental tenderness for the picturesque and unfortunate family that had sunk from the splendors of a throne that had been theirs for centuries into the sordid misery of royal pauperism. Burns, whose ancestors had been "out" in the '45, shared this sentiment, as Walter Scott later shared it, both realizing that it had nothing to do with practical politics. Out of this feeling there grew a considerable body of poetry, a poetry full of idealism, touched with melancholy, and atoning for its lack of reality by a richness

of imaginative emotion. Burns led the way in this unique movement, and was worthily followed by such writers as Lady Nairne, James Hogg, and Sir Walter himself. He followed his usual custom of availing himself of fragments of the older lyrics, but as usual he polished the pebbles into jewels and set them in gold. Here are a few specimens of this poetry of a lost cause.

IT WAS A' FOR OUR RIGHTFU' KING

It was a' for our rightfu' King,
 We left fair Scotland's strand;
 It was a' for 'our rightfu' King,
 We e'er saw Irish land,
 My dear,
 We e'er saw Irish land.

Now a' is done that men can do,
 And a' is done in vain;
 My love and native land farewell,
 For I maun cross the main,
 My dear,
 For I maun cross the main.

He turn'd him right and round about
 Upon the Irish shore;
 And gae his bridle-reins a shake,
 With adieu for evermore,
 My dear,
 Adieu for evermore.

must

gave

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 163

The sodger from the wars returns, soldier
 The sailor frae the main;
But I hae parted frae my love,
 Never to meet again,
 My dear,
 Never to meet again.

When day is gane, and night is come,
 And a' folk bound to sleep,
I think on him that's far awa',
 The lee-lang night, and weep, live-long
 My dear,
 The lee-lang night, and weep.

COME BOAT ME O'ER TO CHARLIE

Come boat me o'er, come row me o'er,
 Come boat me o'er to Charlie;
I'll gie John Ross another bawbee, half-penny
 To boat me o'er to Charlie.

We'll o'er the water, we'll o'er the sea,
 We'll o'er the water to Charlie;
Come weal, come woe, we'll gather and go,
 And live or die wi' Charlie.

I lo'e weel my Charlie's name, love
 Tho' some there be abhor him:
But O, to see auld Nick gaun hame, going
 And Charlie's faes before him! foes

I swear and vow by moon and stars,
 And sun that shines so clearly,
If I had twenty thousand lives,
 I'd die as aft for Charlie.

THE HIGHLAND LADDIE

gaily dressed

The bonniest lad that e'er I saw,
Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie,
Wore a plaid and was fu' braw,
Bonnie Highland laddie.
On his head a bonnet blue,
Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie,
His royal heart was firm and true,
Bonnie Highland laddie.

Trumpets sound and cannons roar,
Bonnie lassie, Lawland lassie,
And a' the hills wi' echoes roar,
Bonnie Lawland lassie.
Glory, Honour, now invite,
Bonnie lassie, Lawland lassie,
For Freedom and my King to fight,
Bonnie Lawland lassie.

The sun a backward course shall take,
Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie,
Ere aught thy manly courage shake,
Bonnie Highland laddie.
Go, for yours^{el} procure renown,
Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie,
And for your lawful King his crown,
Bonnie Highland laddie!

BANNOCKS O' BARLEY

Bannocks o' bear meal,	Cakes, barley
Bannocks o' barley;	
Here's to the Highlandman's	
Bannocks o' barley.	
Wha in a brulzie	broil
Will first cry a parley?	
Never the lads wi'	
The bannocks o' barley.	

Bannocks o' bear meal,	
Bannocks o' barley;	
Here's to the lads wi'	
The bannocks o' barley;	
Wha in his wae-days	woful-
Were loyal to Charlie?	
Wha but the lads wi'	
The bannocks o' barley.	

KENMURE'S ON AND AWA

O, Kenmure's on and awa, Willie!
 O, Kenmure's on and awa!
 And Kenmure's lord's the bravest lord
 That ever Galloway saw.

Success to Kenmure's band, Willie!
 Success to Kenmure's band;
 There's no a heart that fears a Whig
 That rides by Kenmure's hand.

blood

Here's Kenmure's health in wine, Willie!
 Here's Kenmure's health in wine;
 There ne'er was a coward o' Kenmure's blude,
 Nor yet o' Gordon's line.

O, Kenmure's lads are men, Willie!
 O, Kenmure's lads are men;
 Their hearts and swords are metal true,
 And that their faes shall ken.

They'll live or die wi' fame, Willie!
 They'll live or die wi' fame;
 But soon, wi' sounding victorie,
 May Kenmure's lord come hame!

Here's him that's far awa, Willie!
 Here's him that's far awa;
 And here's the flower that I lo'e best—
 The rose that's like the snaw!

THERE'LL NEVER BE PEACE TILL JAMIE COMES HAME

By yon castle wa', at the close of the day,
 I heard a man sing, tho' his head it was grey:
 And as he was singing, the tears down came—
 'There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.

'The church is in ruins, the state is in jars,
 Delusions, oppressions, and murderous wars;
 We dare na weel say't, but we ken wha's to blame—
 There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.

BURNS AND SCOTTISH SONG 167

'My seven braw sons for Jamie drew sword, handsome
 And now I greet round their green beds in the yerd; weep, churchyard
 It brak the sweet heart o' my faithfu' auld dame—
 There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.

'Now life is a burden that bows me down,
 Sin' I tint my bairns, and he tint his crown; lost, children
 But till my last moment my words are the same—
 There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.'

I HAE BEEN AT CROOKIEDEN

I hae been at Crookieden— Hell
 My bonie laddie, Highland laddie!
 Viewing Willie and his men— Duke of Cumber-
 My bonie laddie, Highland laddie! land
 There our foes that burnt and slew—
 My bonie laddie, Highland laddie!
 There at last they gat their due—
 My bonie laddie, Highland laddie!

Satan sits in his black neuk— corner
 My bonie laddie, Highland laddie!
 Breaking sticks to roast the Duke—
 My bonie laddie, Highland laddie!
 The bloody monster gae a yell— gave
 My bonie laddie, Highland laddie!
 And loud the laugh gaed round a' Hell— went
 My bonie laddie, Highland laddie!

CHARLIE HE'S MY DARLING

'Twas on a Monday morning
Right early in the year,
That Charlie came to our town—
The Young Chevalier!

CHORUS

An' Charlie he's my darling,
My darling, my darling,
Charlie he's my darling—
The Young Chevalier!

As he was walking up the street
The city for to view,
O, there he spied a bonie lass
The window looking thro'

rattled

Sae light's he jumped up the stair,
And tirl'd at the pin;
And wha sae ready as hersel'
To let the laddie in!

He set his Jenny on his knee,
All in his Highland dress;
And brawlie weel he kend the way
To please a bonie lass.

It's up yon heathery mountain
And down yon scraggy glen,
We daurna gang a-milking
For Charlie and his men!

Such in nature and origin are the songs of Burns. Of some three hundred written or rewritten by him, a large number are negligible in estimating his poetical capacity. One cause lay in his unfortunate ambition to write in the style of his eighteenth-century predecessors in English, with the accompanying mythological allusions, personifications, and scraps of artificial diction. Another was his pathetic eagerness to supply Thomson with material in his undertaking to preserve the old melodies—an eagerness which often led him to send in verses of which he himself felt that their only defense was that they were better than none. Thus his collected works are burdened with a considerable mass of very indifferent stuff. But when this has all been removed, we have left a body of song such as probably no writer in any language has bequeathed to his country. It is marked, first of all, by its peculiar harmony of expression with the utterance of the common people. Direct and simple, its diction was still capable of carrying intense feeling, a humor incomparable in its archness and sly mirth, and a power of idealizing ordinary experience without effort or affectation. The union of these words with the traditional melodies, on which we have so

strongly insisted, gave them a superb singing quality, which has had as much to do with their popularity as their thought or their feeling. This union, however, has its drawbacks when we come to consider the songs as literature; for to present them as here in bare print without the living tune is to perpetuate a divorce which their author never contemplated. No editor of Burns can fail to feel a pang when he thinks that these words may be heard by ears that carry no echo of the airs to which they were born. Here lies the fundamental reason for what seems to outsiders the exaggerated estimate of Burns in the judgment of his countrymen. What they extol is not mere literature, but song, the combination of poetry and music; and it is only when Burns is judged as an artist in this double sense that he is judged fairly.

CHAPTER IV

SATIRES AND EPISTLES

FAME first came to Burns through his satires. Before he had been recognized by the Edinburgh litterateurs, before he had written more than a handful of songs, he was known and feared on his own countryside as a formidable critic of ecclesiastical tyranny. It was this reputation that made possible the success of the subscription to the Kilmarnock volume, and so saved Burns to Scotland.

Two characteristics of the Kirk of Scotland had tended to prepare the people to welcome an attack on its authority: the severity with which the clergy administered discipline, and the extremes to which they had pushed their Calvinism.

In spite of the existence of dissenting bodies, the great mass of the population belonged to the established church, and both their spiritual privileges and their social standing were at the mercy of the Kirk session and the presiding minister.

It is difficult for a Protestant community to-day to realize the extent to which the conduct of the individual and the family were controlled by the ecclesiastical authorities. Offenses which now would at most be the subject of private remonstrance were treated as public crimes and expiated in church before the whole parish. Gavin Hamilton, Burns's friend and landlord at Mossgiel, a liberal gentleman of means and standing, was prosecuted in the church courts for lax attendance at divine service, for traveling on Sabbath, for neglecting family worship, and for having had one of his servants dig new potatoes on the Lord's day. Burns's irregular relations with Jean Armour led to successive appearances by both him and Jean before the congregation, to receive open rebuke and to profess repentance. Further expiation was demanded in the form of a contribution for the poor.

Against the discipline which he himself had to suffer Burns seems to have made no protest, and probably thought it just enough; but what he considered the persecution of his friend roused his indignation. This was all the fiercer as he regarded some of the members of the session as hypocrites, whose own private morals would not

stand examination. Chief among these was a certain William Fisher, immortalized in a satire the application of which was meant to extend to the whole class which he represented.

HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER

O Thou, that in the Heavens does dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best Thyself,
Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,

A' for thy glory,
And no for ony guid or ill
They've done before thee!

I bless and praise thy matchless might,
Whan thousands thou hast left in night,
That I am here before thy sight,

For gifts an' grace
A burning and a shining light,
To a' this place.

What was I, or my generation,
That I should get sic exaltation?
I, wha deserv'd most just damnation,

such

For broken laws,
Sax thousand years ere my creation,
Thro' Adam's cause.

Six

When from my mither's womb I fell,
Thou might have plung'd me deep in hell,
To gnash my gooms, and weep and wail,

gums

In burning lakes,
Where damnèd devils roar and yell,
Chain'd to their stakes;

Yet I am here a chosen sample,
 To show Thy grace is great and ample;
 I'm here a pillar o' Thy temple,
 Strong as a rock,
 A guide, a buckler, an example
 To a' Thy flock.

troubled

But yet, O Lord I confess I must
 At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust;
 An' sometimes too, in worldly trust,
 Vile self gets in;
 But Thou remembers we are dust,
 Defil'd wi' sin.

O Lord I yestreen, Thou kens, wi' Meg—
 Thy pardon I sincerely beg—
 O! may 't ne'er be a living plague
 To my dishonour,
 An' I'll ne'er lift a lawless leg
 Again upon her.

must

Besides I farther maun avow—
 Wi' Leezie's lass, three times, I trow—
 drunk But, Lord, that Friday I was fou,
 When I cam near her,
 Or else, Thou kens, thy servant true
 meddle with Wad never steer her.

too

May be Thou lets this fleshly thorn
 Beset Thy servant e'en and morn
 Lest he owre high and proud should turn
 That he's sae gifted;
 If sae, Thy hand maun e'en be borne,
 Until thou lift it.

Lord, bless Thy chosen in this place,
 For here thou hast a chosen race;
 But God confound their stubborn face,
 And blast their name,
 Wha' bring Thy elders to disgrace
 An' public shame.

Lord, mind Gau'n Hamilton's deserts,
 He drinks, an' swears, an' plays at cartes,
 Yet has sae mony takin' arts
 Wi' great an' sma',
 Frae God's ain priest the people's hearts
 He steals awa'.

cards

An' when we chasten'd him therefor,
 Thou kens how he bred sic a splore
 As set the world in a roar
 O' laughin' at us;
 Curse thou his basket and his store,
 Kail and potatoes!

raised such a

Lord hear my earnest cry an' pray'r,
 Against that presbyt'ry o' Ayr;
 Thy strong right hand, Lord, make it bare
 Upo' their heads;
 Lord, visit them, and dinna spare,
 For their misdeeds.

do not

O Lord my God, that glib-tongu'd Aiken,
 My very heart and soul are quakin',
 To think how we stood sweatin', shakin',
 An' pish'd wi' dread,
 While he, wi' hingin' lips and snakin',
 Held up his head.

sneering

Lord, in Thy day of vengeance try him;
 Lord, visit him wha did employ him,
 And pass not in Thy mercy by them,
 Nor hear their pray'r:
 But, for Thy people's sake, destroy them,
 And dinna spare.

wealth

But, Lord, remember me and mine
 Wi' mercies temporal and divine,
 That I for grace and gear may shine
 Excell'd by nane,
 And a' the glory shall be thine,
 Amen, Amen!

Still more highly generalized is his *Address to the Unco Guid*, a plea for charity in judgment, kept from sentimentalism by its gleam of humor. It has perhaps the widest appeal of any of his poems of this class. One may note that as Burns passes from the satirical and humorous tone to the directly didactic, the dialect disappears, and the last two stanzas are practically pure English.

ADDRESS TO THE UNCO GUID, OR THE RIGIDLY RIGHTEOUS

together

*My son, these maxims make a rule,
 And lump them aye thegither:
 The rigid righteous is a fool,
 The rigid wise anither:*

<i>The cleanest corn that e'er was dight,</i>	sifted
<i>May hae some pyles o' caff in;</i>	grains, chaff
<i>So ne'er a fellow-creature slight</i>	
<i>For random fits o' daffin.</i>	larking

SOLOMON (*Eccles.* vii. 16).

O ye wha are sae guid yoursel,	so good
Sae pious and sae holy,	
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell	
Your neibour's fauts and folly!	faults
Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill,	well-going
Supplied wi' store o' water:	
The heapet happer's ebbing still,	hopper
An' still the clap plays clatter!	clapper

Hear me, ye venerable core,	company
As counsel for poor mortals	
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door,	sedate
For glaikit Folly's portals;	giddy
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,	
Would here propone defences,—	put forth
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes,	restive
Their failings and mischances.	

Ye see your state wi' theirs compar'd,	
And shudder at the niffer;	exchange
But cast a moment's fair regard—	
What makes the mighty differ?	difference
Discount what scant occasion gave,	
That purity ye pride in,	
And (what's aft mair than a' the lave)	rest
Your better art o' hidin'.	

Gives

Think, when your castigated pulse
 Gies now and then a wallop,
 What ragings must his veins convulse,
 That still eternal gallop!
 Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
 Right on ye scud your sea-way;
 But in the teeth o' baith to sail,
 It makes an unco leeway.

uncommon

See Social life and Glee sit down,
 All joyous and unthinking,
 Till, quite transmugrified, they're grown
 Debauchery and Drinking:
 O would they stay to calculate
 Th' eternal consequences;
 Or—your more dreaded hell to state—
 Damnation of expenses!

ear

perhaps

Ye high, exalted virtuous Dames,
 Tied up in godly laces,
 Before ye gie poor Frailty names,
 Suppose a change o' cases;
 A dear lov'd lad, convenience snug,
 A treacherous inclination—
 But, let me whisper i' your lug,
 Ye're aiblins nae temptation.

trifle

Then gently scan your brother man,
 Still gentler sister woman;
 Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang,
 To step aside is human.

One point must still be greatly dark,
 The moving why they do it;
 And just as lamely can ye mark
 How far perhaps they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
 Decidedly can try us;
 He knows each chord, its various tone,
 Each spring, its various bias.
 Then at the balance let's be mute,
 We never can adjust it;
 What's done we partly may compute,
 But know not what's resisted.

As regards the questions of doctrine there were in the church two main parties, known as the Auld Lights and the New Lights. The former were high Calvinists, emphasizing the doctrines of election, predestination, original sin, and eternal punishment. The latter comprised many of the younger clergy who had been touched by the rationalistic tendencies of the century, and who were blamed for various heresies—notably Arminianism and Socinianism. Whatever their precise beliefs, they laid less stress than their opponents on dogma and more on benevolent conduct, and Burns had strong sympathy with their liberalism. He first appeared in their support in an *Epistle to John Goldie*, a Kilmarnock wine-

merchant who had published *Essays on Various Important Subjects, Moral and Divine*. Though he does not explicitly accept the author's Arminianism, he makes it clear that he relished his attacks on orthodoxy. A quarrel between two prominent Auld Licht ministers gave him his next opportunity, and the circulation in manuscript of *The Twa Herds: or, The Holy Tulyie* made him a personage in the district. With an irony more vigorous than delicate he affects to lament that

pastors, west
gave

The twa best herds in a' the wast,
That e'er ga'e gospel horn a blast
These five an' twenty simmers past—

sorrow
quarrel
Between

Oh, dool to tell!
Hae had a bitter black out-cast
Atween themsel,

and he ends with the hope that if patronage could be abolished and the lairds forced to give

the brutes the power themsels
To chuse their herds,

gallows

Then Orthodoxy yet may prance,
An' Learning in a woody dance,
An' that fell cur ca'd 'common-sense,'

sorely

That bites sae sair,
Be banish'd o'er the sea to France:
Let him bark there.

More light is thrown on Burns's positive attitude in religious matters by his *Epistle to McMath*, a young New Licht minister in Tarbolton. From the evidences of the letters, we are justified in accepting at its face value the profession of reverence for true religion made by Burns in this epistle; his hatred of the sham needs no corroboration.

TO THE REV. JOHN M'MATH

Enclosing a Copy of *Holy Willie's Prayer*, which he had requested, September 17, 1785

While at the stook the shearers cow'r	shock, reapers
To shun the bitter blandin' show'r,	driving
Or, in gulravage rinnin', scour;	horseplay running
To pass the time,	
To you I dedicate the hour	
In idle rhyme.	

My Musie, tir'd wi' mony a sonnet	
On gown, an' ban', an' douce black-bonnet,	sedate
Is grown right eerie now she's done it,	scared
Lest they should blame her,	
An' rouse their holy thunder on it,	
And anathém her.	curse

I own 'twas rash, an' rather hardy,
That I, a simple country bardie,
Shou'd meddle wi' a pack sae sturdy,
 Wha, if they ken me,
Can easy, wi' a single wordie,
 Lowse hell upon me.

Loose

But I gae mad at their grimaces,
 Their sighin', cantin', grace-proud faces,
 Their three-mile prayers, and half-mile graces,
 Their raxin' conscience,
 Whase greed, revenge, an' pride disgraces
 Waur nor their nonsense.

elastic

Worse than

There's Gau'n, misca't waur than a beast,
Wha has mair honour in his breast
Than many scores as guid's the priest
 Wha sae abus'd him:
An' may a bard no crack his jest
 What way they've used him?

good as

On the fashion

See him the poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word an' deed,
An' shall his fame an' honour bleed
By worthless skellums,
An' not a Muse erect her head
To cove the blellums?

railers

daunt, blusterers

O Pope, had I thy satire's darts
To gie the rascals their deserts,
I'd rip their rotten, hollow hearts,
An' tell aloud
Their jugglin', hocus-pocus arts
To cheat the crowd.

give

God knows I'm no the thing I should be,
 Nor am I even the thing I could be,
 But, twenty times, I rather would be
 An atheist clean,
 Than under gospel colours hid be,
 Just for a screen.

An honest man may like a glass,
 An honest man may like a lass;
 But mean revenge, an' malice fause, false
 He'll still disdain,
 An' then cry zeal for gospel laws,
 Like some we ken.

They tak religion in their mouth;
 They talk o' mercy, grace, an' truth,
 For what? To gie their malice skouth scope
 On some puir wight,
 An' hunt him down, o'er right an' ruth, against
 To ruin straight.

All hail, Religion, maid divine!
 Pardon a muse sae mean as mine,
 Who in her rough imperfect line
 Thus daurs to name thee;
 To stigmatize false friends of thine
 Can ne'er defame thee.

Tho' blotcht an' foul wi' mony a stain,
 An' far unworthy of thy train,
 Wi' trembling voice I tune my strain
 To join wi' those
 Who boldly daur thy cause maintain
 In spite o' foes:

In spite o' crowds, in spite o' mobs,
 In spite of undermining jobs,
 In spite o' dark banditti stabs
 At worth an' merit,
 By scoundrels, even wi' holy robes,
 But hellish spirit.

O Ayr, my dear, my native ground!
 Within thy presbyterial bound,
 A candid lib'ral band is found
 Of public teachers,
 As men, as Christians too, renown'd,
 An' manly preachers.

Sir, in that circle you are nam'd,
 Sir, in that circle you are fam'd;
 An' some, by whom your doctrine's blam'd,
 (Which gies you honour)—
 Even, sir, by them your heart's esteem'd,
 An' winning manner.

Pardon this freedom I have ta'en,
 An' if impertinent I've been,
 Impute it not, good sir, in ane
 Whase heart ne'er wrang'd ye,
 But to his utmost would befriend
 Ought that belang'd ye.

was yours

A further fling at orthodoxy appeared in *The Ordination*, a piece written to comfort the Kil-marnock liberals when an Auld Licht minister was selected for the second charge there. The

tone is again one of ironical congratulation, and Burns describes the rejoicings of the elect with infinite zest. Two stanzas on the church music will illustrate his method.

Mak haste an' turn King David owre,	open the Psalms
An' lilt wi' holy clangor ;	sing
O' double verse come gie us four	give
An' skirl up the <i>Bangor</i> :	shriek, a Psalm-
This day the Kirk kicks up a stoure,	tune
Nae mair the knaves shall wrang her,	dust
For Heresy is in her pow'r,	No more
And gloriously she'll whang her	thrash
Wi' pith this day.	

.

Nae mair by Babel streams we'll weep,	
To think upon our Zion ;	
And hing our fiddles up to sleep,	hang
Like baby-clouds a-dryin' ;	
Come, screw the pegs wi' tunefu' cheep,	chirp
And o'er the thairms be tryin' ;	strings
O, rare ! to see our elbucks wheep,	elbows jerk
And a' like lamb-tails flyin'	
Fu' fast this day !	

In the same ironical fashion he digresses in his *Dedication to Gavin Hamilton* to satirize the "high-fliers' " contempt for "cold morality" and for their faith in the power of orthodox belief to cover lapses in conduct.

Morality, thou deadly bane,
 Thy tens o' thousands thou hast slain!
 Vain is his hope, whose stay and trust is
 In moral mercy, truth and justice!

small coin

No—stretch a point to catch a plack;

Abuse a brother to his back;

window from

Steal thro' the winnock frae a whore,

But point the rake that takes the door:

.

any whinstone

Be to the poor like ony whunstane,

hold, grindstone

And haud their noses to the grunstone;

Ply ev'ry art o' legal thieving;

No matter—stick to sound believing.

palms

Learn three-mile pray'rs, an' half-mile graces,

Wi' weel-spread looves, an' lang, wry faces;

Grunt up a solemn, lengthen'd groan,

And damn a' parties but your own;

I'll warrant them ye're nae deceiver,

A steady, sturdy, staunch believer.

The period within which these satires were written was short—1785 and 1786; but some three years later, on the prosecution of a liberal minister, Doctor McGill of Ayr, for the publication of *A Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ*, which was charged with teaching Unitarianism, Burns took up the theme again. *The Kirk's Alarm* is a rattling “ballad,” full of energy

and scurrilous wit, but, like many of its kind, it has lost much of its interest through the great amount of personal detail. A few stanzas will show that, even after his absence from local politics during his Edinburgh sojourn, he had lost none of his gusto in belaboring the Ayrshire Calvinists.

Orthodox, Orthodox, wha believe in John Knox,
 Let me sound an alarm to your conscience:
 There's a heretic blast has been blawn i' the wast,
 That what is not sense must be nonsense.

Dr. Mac, Dr. Mac, you should stretch on a rack,
 To strike evil-doers wi' terror;
 To join faith and sense upon any pretence,
 Is heretic, damnable error.

.

D'rymple mild, D'rymple mild, tho' your heart's like
 a child,
 And your life like the new driven snaw,
 Yet that winna save ye, auld Satan must have ye,
 For preaching that three's ane and twa.

Calvin's sons, Calvin's sons, seize your sp'ritual guns;
 Ammunition you never can need;
 Your hearts are the stuff will be powther enough,
 And your skulls are storehouses o' lead.

It was inevitable from the nature and purpose of these satirical poems that, however keen an interest they might raise in their time and place, a large part of that interest should evaporate in the course of time. Yet it would be a mistake to regard their importance as limited to raising a laugh against a few obscure bigots. The evils that Burns attacked, however his verses may be tinged with personal animus and occasional injustice, were real evils that existed far beyond the county of Ayr; and in the movement for enlightenment and liberation from these evils and their like that was then sweeping over Scotland, the wit and invective of the poet played no small part. The development that followed did, indeed, take a direction that he was far from foreseeing. The moderate party, which he supported, gradually gained the upper hand in the Kirk, and, upholding as it did the system of patronage, became more and more associated with the aristocracy who bestowed the livings. The result was that the moderate clergy degenerated under prosperity and lost their spiritual zeal; while their opponents, chastened by adversity, became the champions of the autonomy of the church, and, in the "ten years' conflict" that broke out little

more than a generation after the death of Burns, showed themselves of the stuff of the martyrs. It would be impossible to trace the extent of the influence of the poet on the purging of orthodoxy or on the limitation of ecclesiastical despotism, since his work was in accord with the drift of the times; but it is fair to infer that, especially among the common people who were less likely to be reached by more philosophical discussion, his share was far from inconsiderable.

The poetical value of the satires is another matter. It may be questioned whether satire is ever essentially poetry, as poetry has been understood for the last hundred years. The dominant mood of satire is too antagonistic to imagination. But if we restrict our attention to the characteristic qualities of verse satire—vividness in depicting its object, blazing indignation or bitter scorn in its attitude, and wit in its expression, we shall be forced to grant that Burns achieved here notable success. Of the rarer power of satire to rise above the local, temporal, and personal to the exhibiting of universal elements in human life, there are comparatively few instances in Burns. The *Address to the Unco Guid* is perhaps the finest example; and here, as usually in his work, the ap-

proach to the general leads him to drop the scourge for the sermon.

In his tendency to preach, Burns was as much the inheritor of a national tradition as in any of his other characteristics. A strain of moralizing is well marked in the Scottish poets even before the Reformation, and, since the time of Burns, the preaching Scot has been notably exemplified not only in a professed prophet like Carlyle, but in so artistic a temperament as Stevenson. Nor did consciousness of his failures in practise embarrass Burns in the indulgence of the luxury of precept. Side by side with frank confessions of weakness we find earnest if not stern exhortations to do, not as he did, but as he taught. And as Scots have an appetite for hearing as well as for making sermons, his didactic pieces are among those most quoted and relished by his countrymen. The morally elevated but poetically inferior closing stanzas of *The Cotter's Saturday Night* are an instance in point; others are the morals appended to *To a Mouse* and *To a Daisy*, and to a number of his rhyming epistles.

These epistles are among the most significant of his writings for the reader in search of personal revelations. The *Epistle to James Smith*

contains the much-quoted stanza on the poet's motives:

Some rhyme a neebor's name to lash;	
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needful cash;	
Some rhyme to court the countra clash,	gossip
An' raise a din;	
For me, an aim I never fash;	trouble about
I rhyme for fun.	

Another gives his view of his equipment:

The star that rules my luckless lot,	
Has fated me the russet coat,	
An' damned my fortune to the groat;	
But, in requit,	
Has blest me with a random-shot	
O' countra wit.	country

Then he passes from literary considerations to his general philosophy of life:

But why o' death begin a tale?
 Just now we're living sound an' hale;
 Then top and maintop crowd the sail;
 Heave Care o'er-side!
 And large, before Enjoyment's gale,
 Let's tak the tide.

.

When ance life's day draws near the gloamin,
 Then fareweel vacant, careless roamin;
 An' fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin,
 An' social noise:
 An' fareweel dear, deluding Woman,
 The joy of joys!

Here, as often, he contrasts his own reckless impulsive temper with that of prudent calculation:

With steady aim, some Fortune chase;
Keen Hope does ev'ry sinew brace;
Thro' fair, thro' foul, they urge the race,
And seize the prey:
Then cannie, in some cozie place,
They close the day.

quietly

And others, like your humble servan',
Poor wights! nae rules nor roads observin',
To right or left eternal swervin',
They zig-zag on;
Till, curst with age, obscure an' starvin',
They aften groan.

.

O ye douce folk that live by rule,
Grave, tideless-blooded, calm an' cool,
Compar'd wi' you—O fool! fool! fool!
How much unlike!

Your hearts are just a standing pool,
Your lives a dyke!

stone wall

Nothing is more characteristic of the poet than this attitude toward prudence—this mixture of intellectual respect with emotional contempt. He admits freely that restraint and calculation pay, but impulse makes life so much more interesting!

The *Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet*, deserves to be quoted in full. It contains the final phrasing of the central point of Burns's ethics, the Scottish rustic's version of that philosophy of benevolence with which Shaftesbury sought to warm the chill of eighteenth-century thought:

The heart aye's the part aye
That makes us right or wrang.

The mood of this poem is Burns's middle mood, lying between the black melancholy of his poems of despair and remorse and the exhilaration of his more exalted bacchanalian and love songs—the mood, we may infer, of his normal working life. We may again observe the correspondence between the change of dialect and change of tone in stanzas nine and ten, the increase of artificiality coming with his literary English and culminating in the unspeakable “tenebrific scene.” His humor returns with his Scots in the last verse.

EPISTLE TO DAVIE, A BROTHER POET

While winds frae aff Ben Lomond blaw,
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw,
 And hing us owre the ingle,
I set me down to pass the time,
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
 In hamely westlin jingle.

hang, fire

west-country

In, chimney-
corner

comfortable

value

While frosty winds blow in the drift,
Ben to the chimla lug,
I grudge a wee the great-folk's gift,
That live sae bien an' snug;
I tent less, and want less
Their roomy fire-side;
But hanker and canker
To see their cursèd pride.

fellows, some-
times
dolts, roister

spend it

trouble

wealth

lusty

More ask not

fig

It's hardly in a body's pow'r,
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiefls are whyles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
And ken na how to wair't:
But, Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head,
Tho' we hae little gear,
We're fit to win our daily bread,
As lang's we're hale and fier:
'Mair spier na, nor fear na,'
Auld age ne'er mind a feg;
The last o't, the warst o't,
Is only but to beg.

bones

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin
Is, doubtless, great distress!
Yet then content could mak us blest;
Ev'n then, sometimes, we'd snatch a taste
Of truest happiness.

The honest heart that's free frae a'

Intended fraud or guile,

However Fortune kick the ba',

ball

Has aye some cause to smile:

And mind still, you'll find still,

A comfort this nae sma';

not small

Nae mair then, we'll care then,

Nae farther can we fa'.

What tho' like commoners of air,

We wander out, we know not where,

But either house or ha'?

Without

Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,

The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,

Are free alike to all.

In days when daisies deck the ground,

And blackbirds whistle clear,

With honest joy our hearts will bound,

To see the coming year:

On braes when we please, then,

hill-sides

We'll sit and sowth a tune;

hum

Syne rhyme till't, we'll time till't,

Then

And sing't when we hae done.

It's no in titles nor in rank;

It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,

To purchase peace and rest;

It's no in making muckle, mair:

much, more

It's no in books, it's no in lear,

learning

To make us truly blest:

If happiness hae not her seat
 And centre in the breast,
 We may be wise, or rich, or great,
 But never can be blest:
 Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
 Could make us happy lang;
 The heart aye's the part aye
 That makes us right or wrang.

such

Think ye, that sic as you and I,
 Wha drudge and drive thro' wet an' dry,
 Wi' never-ceasing toil;
 Think ye, are we less blest than they,
 Wha scarcely tent us in their way,
 As hardly worth their while?
 Alas! how oft in haughty mood,
 God's creatures they oppress!
 Or else, neglecting a' that's guid,
 They riot in excess!
 Baith careless, and fearless,
 Of either heav'n or hell!
 Esteeming, and deeming
 It's a' an idle tale!

note

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce;
 Nor make our scanty pleasures less,
 By pining at our state;
 And, even should misfortunes come,
 I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,
 An's thankfu' for them yet.

And am

They gie the wit of age to youth;
They let us ken oursel;
They mak us see the naked truth,
The real guid and ill.
Tho' losses, and crosses,
Be lessons right severe,
There's wit there, ye'll get there,
Ye'll find nae other where.

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts!
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,
And flatt'ry I detest)
This life has joys for you and I;
And joys that riches ne'er could buy;
And joys the very best.
There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
The lover an' the frien';
Ye hae your Meg, your dearest part,
And I my darling Jean!
It warms me, it charms me,
To mention but her name:
It heats me, it beets me,
And sets me a' on flame!

note
cards

kindles

O all ye pow'rs who rule above!
O Thou, whose very self art love!
Thou know'st my words sincere!
The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear!

When heart-corroding care and grief
 Deprive my soul of rest,
 Her dear idea brings relief
 And solace to my breast.
 Thou Being, All-seeing,
 O hear my fervent pray'r;
 Still take her, and make her
 Thy most peculiar care!

All hail, ye tender feelings dear!
 The smile of love, the friendly tear,
 The sympathetic glow!
 Long since this world's thorny ways
 Had number'd out my weary days,
 Had it not been for you!
 Fate still has blest me with a friend,
 In every care and ill;
 And oft a more endearing band,
 A tie more tender still.
 It lightens, it brightens
 The tenebrific scene,
 To meet with, and greet with
 My Davie or my Jean.

O, how that name inspires my style!
 The words come skelpin', rank and file,
 Amaist before I ken!
 The ready measure rins as fine
 As Phoebus and the famous Nine
 Were glowrin' owre my pen.

spanking

Almost

staring over

My spavied Pegasus will limp,	spavined
Till ance he's fairly het;	once, hot
And then he'll hiltch, and stilt, and jump,	hobble, limp,
An' rin an unco fit:	jump
But lest then the beast then	surprising spurt
Should rue this hasty ride,	
I'll light now, and dight now	wipe
His sweaty, wizen'd hide.	

The didactic tendency reaches its height in the *Epistle to a Young Friend*. Here there is no personal confession, but a conscious and professed sermon, unrelated, as the last line shows, to the practise of the preacher. It is, of course, only poetry in the eighteenth-century sense—

What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed—

and as such it should be judged. The critics who have reacted most violently against the attempted canonization of Burns have been inclined to sneer at this admirable homily, and to insinuate insincerity. But human nature affords every-day examples of just such perfectly sincere inconsistency as we find between the sixth stanza and Burns's own conduct; while not inconsistency but a very genuine rhetoric inspires the characteristic quatrain which closes the seventh.

EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND

sort of

I lang hae thought, my youthfu' friend,
 A something to have sent you,
 Tho' it should serve nae ither end
 Than just a kind memento;
 But how the subject-theme may gang,
 Let time and chance determine;
 Perhaps it may turn out a sang,
 Perhaps turn out a sermon.

queer
much

Ye'll try the world soon, my lad,
 And, Andrew dear, believe me,
 Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,
 And muckle they may grieve ye:
 For care and trouble set your thought,
 Ev'n when your end's attainéd;
 And a' your views may come to nought,
 Where ev'ry nerve is strainéd.

extremely

I'll no say men are villains a';
 The real harden'd wicked,
 Wha hae nae check but human law,
 Are to a few restrickéd;
 But och! mankind are unco weak,
 An' little to be trusted;
 If Self the wavering balance shake,
 It's rarely right adjustéd!

Yet they wha fa' in Fortune's strife,
 Their fate we shouldna censure;
 For still th' important end of life
 They equally may answer.

A man may hae an honest heart,
 Tho' poortith hourly stare him; poverty
 A man may tak a neibor's part,
 Yet hae nae cash to spare him.

Aye free, aff han', your story tell,
 When wi' a bosom crony;
 But still keep something to yoursel
 Ye scarcely tell to ony.
 Conceal yoursel as weel's ye can
 Frae critical dissection;
 But keek thro' ev'ry other man pry
 Wi' sharpen'd sly inspection.

The sacred lowe o' weel-plac'd love, flame
 Luxuriantly indulge it;
 But never tempt th' illicit rove, attempt, roving
 Tho' naething should divulge it:
 I waive the quantum o' the sin,
 The hazard of concealing;
 But och! it hardens a' within,
 And petrifies the feeling!

To catch Dame Fortune's golden smile,
 Assiduous wait upon her;
 And gather gear by ev'ry wile
 That's justified by honour;
 Not for to hide it in a hedge,
 Nor for a train-attendant;
 But for the glorious privilege
 Of being independent.

hold

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip
 To haud the wretch in order;
 But where ye feel your honour grip,
 Let that aye be your border:
 Its slightest touches, instant pause—
 Debar a' side pretences;
 And resolutely keep its laws,
 Uncaring consequences.

The great Creator to revere
 Must sure become the creature;
 But still the preaching cant forbear,
 And ev'n the rigid feature:
 Yet ne'er with wits profane to range
 Be complaisance extended;
 An atheist-laugh's a poor exchange
 For Deity offended.

frolicking

When ranting round in Pleasure's ring,
 Religion may be blinded;
 Or, if she gie a random sting,
 It may be little minded;
 But when on life we're tempest-driv'n—
 A conscience but a canker—
 A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n
 Is sure a noble anchor.

Adieu, dear amiable youth!
 Your heart can ne'er be wanting!
 May prudence, fortitude, and truth
 Erect your brow undaunting.

In ploughman phrase, God send you speed

Still daily to grow wiser;

And may ye better reck the rede

Than ever did th' adviser!

heed the advice

The general level of the rhyming letters of Burns is astonishingly high. They bear, as such compositions should, the impression of free spontaneity, and indeed often read like sheer improvisations. Yet they are sprinkled with admirable stanzas of natural description, shrewd criticism, delightful humor, and are pervaded by a delicate tactfulness possible only to a man with a genius for friendship. They are usually written in the favorite six-line stanza, the meter that flowed most easily from his pen, and in language are the richest vernacular. His ambition to be "literary" seldom brings in its jarring notes here, and indeed at times he seems to avenge himself on this besetting sin by a very individual jocoseness toward the mythological figures that intrude into his more serious efforts. His Muse is the special victim. Instead of the conventional draped figure she becomes a "tapetless, ramfeezl'd hiz-zie," "saft at best an' something lazy;" she is a "thowless jad;" or she is dethroned altogether:

inspire
brewer

“We’ll cry nae jads frae heathen hills
To help or roose us,
But browster wives an’ whisky stills—
They are the Muses!”

Again the tone is one of affectionate familiarity :

Blessings on
almost

Leeze me on rhyme! It’s aye a treasure,
My chief, amaisht my only pleasure;
At hame, a-fiel’, at wark or leisure,
The Muse, poor hizzie,
homespun Tho’ rough an’ raploch be her measure,
She’s seldom lazy.

ill turn

Haud to the Muse, my dainty Davie:
The warl’ may play you monie a shavie,
But for the Muse, she’ll never leave ye,
so poor Tho’ e’er sae puir;
spavin Na, even tho’ limpin wi’ the spavie
Frae door to door!

Once more, half scolding, half flattering:

giddy
winding
Dance

Ye glaikit, gleesome, dainty damies,
Wha by Castalia’s wimplin streamies
Lowp, sing, and lave your pretty limbies,
Ye ken, ye ken,
That strang necessity supreme is
’Mang sons o’ men.

The epigrams, epitaphs, elegies, and other occasional verses thrown off by Burns and dili-

gently collected by his editors need little discussion. They not infrequently exhibit the less generous sides of his character, and but seldom demand rereading on account of their neatness or felicity or energy. One may be given as an example :

ON JOHN DOVE, INNKEEPER

Here lies Johnie Pigeon :

What was his religion

Whae'er desires to ken

In some other warl'

world

Maun follow the carl

Must, old fellow

For here Johnie Pigeon had none !

Strong ale was ablution ;

Small beer, persecution ;

A dram was *memento mori* ;

But a full flowing bowl

Was the saving his soul,

And port was celestial glory !

CHAPTER V

DESCRIPTIVE AND NARRATIVE POETRY

THE "world of Scotch drink, Scotch manners, and Scotch religion" was not, Matthew Arnold insisted, a beautiful world, and it was, he held, a disadvantage to Burns that he had not a beautiful world to deal with. This famous dictum is a standing challenge to any critic who regards Burns as a creator of beauty. It is true that when Burns took this world at its apparent worst, when Scotch drink meant bestial drunkenness, when Scotch manners meant shameless indecency, when Scotch religion meant blasphemous defiance, he created *The Jolly Beggars*, which the same critic found a "splendid and puissant production." We must conclude, then, that sufficient genius can sublimate even a hideously sordid world into a superb work of art, which is presumably beautiful.

But the verdict passed on the Scottish world

of Burns is not to be taken without scrutiny. A review of those poems of Burns that are primarily descriptive will recall to us the chief features of that world.

Let us begin with *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, Burns's tribute to his father's house. Let us discard the introductory stanza of dedication, as not organically a part of the poem. The scene is set in a gray November landscape. The tired laborer is shown returning to his cottage, no touch of idealization being added to the picture of physical weariness save what comes from the feeling for home and wife and children. Then follow the gathering of the older sons and daughter, the telling of the experiences of the week, and the advice of the father. The daughter's suitor arrives, and the girl's consciousness as well as the lover's shyness are delicately rendered. Two stanzas in English moralize the situation, and for our present purpose may be ignored. The supper of porridge and milk and a bit of cheese is followed by a reverent account of family prayers, the father leading, the family joining in the singing of the psalm. And as they part for the night, the poet is carried away

into an elevated apostrophe to the country whose foundations rest upon such a peasantry, and closes with a patriotic prayer for its preservation.

The truth of the picture is indubitable. The poet could, of course, have chosen another phase of the same life. The cotter could have come home rheumatic and found the children squalling and the wife cross. The daughter might have been seduced, and the sons absent in the ale-house. But what he does describe is just as typical, and it is beautiful, though the manners and religion are Scottish.

Another social occasion is the subject of *Halloween*. The poem, with Burns's notes, is a mine of folk-lore, but we are concerned with it as literature. Here the tone is humorous instead of reverent, the characters are mixed, the selection is more widely representative. With complete frankness, the poet exhibits human nature under the influence of the mating instinct, directed by harmless, age-old superstitions. The superstitions are not attacked, but gently ridiculed. The fundamental veracity of the whole is seen when we realize that, in spite of the strong local color, it is psychologically true for similar festivities among the peasantry of all countries.

HALLOWEEN¹

Upon that night, when fairies light	
On Cassilis Downans ² dance,	
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,	over, pastures
On sprightly coursers prance;	road
Or for Colean the rout is ta'en,	
Beneath the moon's pale beams;	
There, up the Cove, ³ to stray an' rove	
Amang the rocks and streams	
To sport that night;	
Amang the bonnie winding banks	
Where Doon rins wimplin' clear,	winding
Where Bruce ⁴ ance ruled the martial ranks	once
An' shook his Carrick spear,	
Some merry friendly country-folks	
Together did convene	
To burn their nits, an' pou their stocks,	nuts, pull, stalks
An' haud their Halloween	keep
Fu' blythe that night:	
The lasses feat, an cleanly neat,	trim
Mair braw than when they're fine;	more handsome
Their faces blythe fu' sweetly kythe	show
Hearts leal, an' warm, an' kin':	loyal, kind
The lads sae trig, wi' wooer-babs	love-knots
Weel knotted on their garten,	garter
Some unco blate, an' some wi' gabs	very shy, chatter
Gar lasses' hearts gang startin'	Make
Whyles fast at night.	Sometimes

must, once
 shut, eyes, grope,
 choose
 big ones, straight
 foolish, lost the
 way
 cabbage
 pulled, choice
 stalk
 bent

earth
 pell-mell
 run
 over, shoulder
 if, pith
 pocket-knives
 Then, above
 cautious

stole

dodges

squealed
 almost
 cuddling

well-hoarded nuts

Then, first and foremost, thro' the kail,
 Their stocks⁵ maun a' be sought ance:
 They steek their een, an' grape an' wale
 For muckle anes an' straught anes.
 Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift,
 An' wander'd thro' the bow-kail,
 An' pou'd, for want o' better shift,
 A runt was like a sow-tail,
 Sae bow'd, that night.

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,
 They roar an' cry a' throu'ther;
 The very wee things toddlin' rin—
 Wi' stocks out-owre their shouther;
 An' gif the custock's sweet or sour,
 Wi' joctelegs they taste them;
 Syne coziely, aboon the door,
 Wi' cannie care they've plac'd them
 To lie that night.

The lasses staw frae 'mang them a'
 To pou their stalks o' corn;⁶
 But Rab slips out, an' jinks about,
 Behint the muckle thorn:
 He grippit Nelly hard an' fast;
 Loud skirled a' the lasses;
 But her tap-pickle maist was lost,
 When kiutlin' i' the fause-house'
 Wi' him that night.

The auld guidwife's well-hoordit nits⁸
 Are round an' round divided,
 An' mony lads' an' lasses' fates
 Are there that night decided:

Some kindle, couthie, side by side,	comfortably .
An' burn thegither trimly ;	
Some start awa, wi' saucy pride,	
An' jump out-owre the chimlie	out of the chim-
Fu' high that night.	ney

Jean slips in twa, wi' tentie e'e ;	watchful
Wha 'twas, she wadna tell ;	
But this is <i>Jock</i> , an' this is <i>me</i> ,	
She says in to hersel :	whispers
He bleez'd owre her, an' she owre him,	blazed
As they wad never mair part ;	
Till fuff ! he started up the lum,	chimney
An' Jean had e'en a sair heart	
To see't that night.	

Poor Willie, wi' his bow-kail runt,	cabbage stump
Was brunt wi' primsie Mallie,	precise Molly
An' Mary, nae doubt, took the drunt,	huff
To be compar'd to Willie :	
Mall's nit lap out, wi' pridefu' fling,	leapt, start
An' her ain fit it brunt it ;	foot
While Willie lap, an' swoor by jing,	by Jove
'Twas just the way he wanted	
To be that night.	

Nell had the fause-house in her min',	mind
She pits hersel an' Rob in ;	
In loving bleeze they sweetly join,	
Till white in ase they're sobbin :	ashes
Nell's heart was dancin' at the view :	
She whisper'd Rob to leuk for't :	
Rob, stownlins, prie'd her bonnie mou',	by stealth, tasted
Fu' cozie in the neuk for't,	mouth
Unseen that night.	corner

Marian

leaves, gabbing,
chat

nearest way

in the dark
groped, beams

frightened

wound, sweated
know, trifling
kiln-pot

beam-end

ask

puffed, smoke

cinder burnt
worsted

young hussy's
dare
Devil
tell

But Merran sat behint their backs,
Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;
She lea'es them gashin' at their cracks,
An' slips out by hersel:
She thro' the yard the nearest taks,
An' to the kiln she goes then,
An' darklins grapit for the bauks,
And in the blue-clue⁹ throws then,
Right fear'd that night.

An' aye she win't, an' aye she swat,
I wat she made nae jaukin';
Till something held within the pat,
Guid Lord! but she was quaukin'!
But whether 'twas the Deil himsel,
Or whether 'twas a bauk-en',
Or whether it was Andrew Bell,
She did na wait on talkin
To spier that night.

Wee Jenny to her grannie says,
'Will ye go wi' me, grannie?
I'll eat the apple¹⁰ at the glass,
I gat frae uncle Johnie.'
She fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt,
In wrath she was sae vap'rin,
She noticed na an aizle brunt
Her braw new worsed apron
Out-thro' that night.

'Ye little skelpie-limmer's face!
I daur you try sic sportin',
As seek the foul Thief ony place,
For him to spae your fortune!

Nae doubt but ye may get a sight!
 Great cause ye hae to fear it;
 For mony a ane has gotten a fright,
 An' lived an' died deleerit,
 On sic a night.

delirious

'Ae hairst afore the Sherra-moor,—
 I mind't as weel's yestreen,
 I was a gilpey then, I'm sure
 I was na past fyfteen:
 The simmer had been cauld an' wat,
 An' stuff was unco green;
 An' aye a rantin' kirk we gat,
 An' just on Halloween
 It fell that night.

One harvest, Sher
 riffmuir
 remember, last
 night
 young girl

'Our stibble-rig was Rab M'Graen,
 A clever, sturdy fallow;
 His sin gat Eppie Sim wi' wean,
 That liv'd in Achmacalla;
 He gat hemp-seed,¹¹ I mind it weel,
 An' he made unco light o't:
 But mony a day was by himsel,
 He was sae sairly frightened
 That vera night.'

grain, extremely
 rollicking harvest
 home

chief harvester

son, child

very
 beside himself
 sorely

Then up gat fechtin' Jamie Fleck,
 An' he swoor by his conscience
 That he could saw hemp-seed a peck;
 For it was a' but nonsense:
 The auld guidman raught down the pock,
 An' out a handfu' gied him;
 Syne bad him slip frae 'mang the folk,
 Sometime when nae ane see'd him,
 An' try't that night.

fighting

sow
 merely
 reached, hag
 gave
 Then
 saw

staggering
dung-fork
trails, back

He marches thro' amang the stacks,
Tho' he was something sturtin';
The graip he for a harrow taks,
An' hauris at his curpin:
An' ev'ry now an' then, he says,
'Hemp-seed! I saw thee,
An' her that is to be my lass
Come after me an' draw thee
As fast this night.'

scared, awe-struck

groan
shoulder, gave,
peep
summersault

He whistled up Lord Lennox' march,
To keep his courage cheery;
Altho' his hair began to arch,
He was sae fley'd an' eerie:
Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane an' gruntle;
He by his shouther gae a keek,
An' tumbld wi' a wintle
Out-owre that night.

halting
hunchbacked
Marian

the sow
Astir

He roar'd a horrid murder-shout,
In dreadfu' desperation!
An' young an' auld come rinnin' out,
An' hear the sad narration:
He swoor 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw,
Or crouchie Merran Humphie,
Till stop! she trotted thro' them a';
An' wha was it but grumphy
Asteer that night!

have gone
winnow
alone
put

Meg fain wad to the barn gane
To winn three wechts o' naething;¹²
But for to meet the Deil her lane,
She pat but little faith in:

She gies the herd a pickle nits,	herd-boy, few
And twa red-cheekit apples,	
To watch, while for the barn she sets,	sets out
In hopes to see Tam Kipples	
That very night.	

She turns the key wi' cannie thraw,	cautious twist
An' owre the threshold ventures;	
But first on Sawnie gies a ca',	call
Syne bauldly in she enters;	Then
A ratton rattl'd up the wa',	rat
An' she cried 'Lord preserve her l'	
An' ran thro' midden-hole an' a',	dunghill pool
Au' pray'd wi' zeal an' fervour	
Fu' fast that night.	

They hoy't out Will, wi' sair advice;	urged
They hecht him some fine braw ane;	promised
It chanced the stack he faddom'd thrice ¹³	measured without
Was timmer-propt for thrawin':	stretched arms
He taks a swirlie auld moss-oak	against leaning
For some black gruesome carlin;	over
An' loot a winze, an' drew a stroke,	gnarled
Till skin in blypes cam haurlin'	beldam
Aff's nieves that night.	uttered a curse
	shreds, peeling
	Off his fists

A wanton widow Leezie was,	
As cantie as a kittlin;	lively
But och! that night, amang the shaws,	woods
She gat a fearfu' settlin'l	
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,	gorse, stone heap
An' owre the hill gaed screevin';	careering
Where three laird's lands met at a burn, ¹⁴	
To dip her left sark-sleeve in,	shirt-
Was bent that night.	

Waterfall
wound
ledge
eddy

peeped

ferns, hillside

unhoused heifer
gave a low
almost leapt,
 sheath
lark high
foot

1715 Rebellion
empty

wot
strange

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
 As thro' the glen it wimpled;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
 Whyles in a wiel it dimpled;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
 Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
 Below the spreading hazel,
 Unseen that night.

Amang the brackens on the brae,
 Between her an' the moon,
The Deil, or else an outler quey,
 Gat up an' gae a croon:
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool;
 Near lav'rock height she jumpit,
But miss'd a fit, an' in the pool
 Out-owre the lugs she plumpit,
 Wi' a plunge that night

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
 The luggies¹⁵ three are ranged;
And every time great care is ta'en,
 To see them duly changed:
Auld uncle John, wha wedlock's joys
 Sin' Mar's year did desire,
Because he gat the toom dish thrice,
 He heav'd them on the fire
 In wrath that night.

Wi' merry sangs, an' friendly cracks,
 I wat they did na weary;
And unco tales, an' funny jokes,—
 Their sports were cheap and cheery;

Till butter'd sow'ns,¹⁶ wi' fragrant lunt,
 Set a' their gabs a-steerin';
 Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt,
 They parted aff careerin'
 Fu' blythe that night.

smoke
 tongues wagging
 Then, liquor

FOOT-NOTES TO HALLOWEEN

[The foot-notes to this poem are those supplied by Burns himself in the Kilmarnock edition.]

¹ Is thought to be a night when witches, devils, and other mischief-making beings, are all abroad on their baneful, midnight errands: particularly, those aerial people, the fairies, are said, on that night to hold a grand anniversary.

² Certain little, romantic, rocky, green hills, in the neighbourhood of the ancient seat of the Earls of Cassilis.

³ A noted cavern near Colean-house, called the Cove of Colean; which, as well as Cassilis Downans, is famed in country story for being a favourite haunt of fairies.

⁴ The famous family of that name, the ancestors of Robert, the great Deliverer of his country, were Earls of Carrick.

⁵ The first ceremony of Halloween is pulling each a *stock*, or plant of kail. They must go out, hand in hand, with eyes shut, and pull the first they meet with: its being big or little, straight or crooked, is prophetic of the size and shape of the grand object of all their spells—the husband or wife. If any *yird*, or earth, stick to the root, that is *tocher*, or fortune; and the taste of the *custoc*, that is, the heart of the stem, is indicative of the natural temper and disposition. Lastly the stems, or to give them their ordinary appellation, the *runts*, are placed somewhere above the head of the door; and the Christian names of the people whom chance brings into the house, are, according to the priority of placing the runts, the names in question.

⁶ They go to the barn-yard, and pull each, at three several times, a stalk of oats. If the third stalk wants the *top pickle*, that is, the grain at the top of the stalk, the party in question will want the maidenhead.

⁷ When the corn is in a doubtful state, by being too green, or wet, the stack-builder, by means of old timber, etc., makes a large apartment in his stack, with an opening in the side which is fairest exposed to the wind: this he calls a *fause-house*.

⁸ Burning the nuts is a favourite charm. They name the lad and lass to each particular nut, as they lay them in the fire; and according as they burn quickly together, or start from beside one another, the course and issue of the courtship will be.

⁹ Whoever would with success try this spell must strictly observe

these directions. Steal out all alone to the kiln, and darkling, throw into the pot, a clue of blue yarn: wind it in a new clue off the old one; and towards the latter end, something will hold the thread: demand, *wha haws?* i. e., who holds? and answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, by naming the Christian and surname of your future spouse.

¹⁰ Take a candle and go alone to a looking glass: eat an apple before it, and some traditions say you should comb your hair all the time; the face of your conjugal companion to be will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.

¹¹ Steal out, unperceived, and sow a handful of hemp seed; harrowing it with anything you can conveniently draw after you. Repeat, now and then, "Hemp seed, I saw [sow] thee, Hemp seed, I saw thee; and him (or her) that is to be my true-love, come after me and pou thee." Look over your left shoulder, and you will see the appearance of the person invoked, in the attitude of pulling hemp. Some traditions say, "come after me and shaw thee," that is, show thyself; in which case it simply appears. Others omit the harrowing, and say, "come after me and harrow thee."

¹² This charm must likewise be performed, unperceived and alone. You go to the barn, and open both doors; taking them off the hinges, if possible; for there is danger that the Being about to appear may shut the doors, and do you some mischief. Then take that instrument used in winnowing the corn, which, in our country-dialect, we call a wecht; and go thro' all the attitudes of letting down corn against the wind. Repeat it three times; and the third time, an apparition will pass thro' the barn, in at the windy door, and out at the other, having both the figure in question and the appearance or retinue, marking the employment or station in life.

¹³ Take an opportunity of going, unnoticed, to a bear-stack, and fathom it three times round. The last fathom of the last time, you will catch in your arms the appearance of your conjugal yoke-fellow.

¹⁴ You go out, one or more, for this is a social spell, to a south-running spring or rivulet, where "three lairds' landa meet," and dip your left shirt sleeve. Go to bed in sight of a fire, and hang your wet sleeve before it to dry. Lie awake, and sometime near midnight, an apparition having the exact figure of the grand object in question, will come and turn the sleeve, as if to dry the other side of it.

¹⁵ Take three dishes; put clean water in one, foul water in another, and leave the third empty: blindfold a person, and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged; he (or she) dips the left hand: if by chance in the clean water, the future husband or wife will come to the bar of matrimony, a maid; if in the foul, a widow; if in the empty dish, it foretells, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times; and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered.

¹⁶ Sowens, with butter instead of milk to them, is always the Halloween supper.

In *The Twa Dogs* we have an entirely different method. Burns here gives expression to his social philosophy in a contrast between rich and poor, and adds a quaint humor to his criticism by placing it in the mouths of the laird's Newfoundland and the cotter's collie. The dogs themselves are delightfully and vividly characterized, and their comments have a detachment that frees the satire from acerbity without rendering it tame. The account of the life of the idle rich may be that of a somewhat remote observer; it has still value as a record of how the peasant views the proprietor. But that of the hard-working farmer lacks no touch of actuality, and is part of the reverse side of the shield shown in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. Yet the tone is not querulous, but echoes rather the quiet conviction that if toil is hard it has its own sweetness, and that honest fatigue is better than boredom.

THE TWA DOGS

'Twas in that place o' Scotland's Isle,
 That bears the name o' auld King Coil,
 Upon a bonnie day in June,
 When wearin' through the afternoon,
 Twa dogs, that werena thrang at hame,
 Forgather'd ance upon a time.

busy
 Met

ears The first I'll name, they ca'd him Caesar,
 Was keepit for his Honour's pleasure;
 whelped His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs,
 Show'd he was nane o' Scotland's dogs,
 But whalpit some place far abroad,
 Where sailors gang to fish for cod.
 His lockèd, letter'd, braw brass collar,
 Shew'd him the gentleman and scholar;

devil But though he was o' high degree,
 The fient a pride, nae pride had he;
 But wad hae spent ane hour caressin'
 mongrel E'en wi' a tinkler-gipsy's messan:
 smithy At kirk or market, mill or smiddie,
 matted cur, Nae tawted tyke, though e'er sae duddie,
 ragged But he wad stand as glad to see him,
 lanted An' stroan'd on stanes an' hillocks wi' him.

other The tither was a ploughman's collie,
 fellow A rhyming, ranting, raving billie;
 Wha for his friend and comrade had him,
 And in his freaks had Luath ca'd him,
 After some dog in Highland sang,
 Was made lang syne—Lord knows how lang

wise, dog He was a gash an' faithfu' tyke,
 leapt, ditch, wall As ever lap a sheugh or dyke;
 pleasant, white- His honest, sonsie, bawsent face
 marked Aye gat him friends in ilka place.
 every His breast was white, his tousie back
 shaggy Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black:
 His gawsie tail, wi' upward curl,
 joyous Hung o'er his hurdies wi' a swirl,
 buttocks

Nae doubt but they were fain o' ither,	glad
And unco pack and thick thegither ;	intimate
Wi' social nose whyles snuff'd and snowkit ;	
Whyles mice and moudieworts they howkit ;	moles, dug
Whyles scour'd awa in lang excursion,	
And worried ither in diversion ;	
Until wi' daffin' weary grown,	merriment
Upon a knowe they sat them down,	knoll
And there began a lang digression	
About the lords of the creation.	

CAESAR

I've aften wonder'd, honest Luath,	
What sort o' life poor dogs like you have ;	
An' when the gentry's life I saw,	
What way poor bodies liv'd ava.	at all
Our Laird gets in his rackèd rents,	
His coals, his kain, and a' his stents ;	rent in kind, c
He rises when he likes himsel' ;	
His flunkies answer at the bell :	
He ca's his coach ; he ca's his horse ;	calls
He draws a bonny silken purse	
As lang's my tail, where, through the steeks,	stitches
The yellow-letter'd Geordie keeks.	guinea peeps
Frae morn to e'en it's nought but toiling	
At baking, roasting, frying, boiling ;	
And though the gentry first are stechin',	cramming
Yet e'en the ha' folk fill their pechan	servants, belly
Wi' sauce, ragouts, and sic like trashtrie,	rubhish
That's little short o' downright wastrie.	waste
Our whipper-in, wee blastit wonner !	wonder
Poor worthless elf ! it eats a dinner	

put, paunch

Better than ony tenant man
His Honour has in a' the lan';
An' what poor cot-folk pit their painch in,
I own it's past my comprehension.

LUATH

troubled
digging, ditch
building, wall
clearing

brood, ragged
children
hand-labor

thatch, rope

sore

almost

must

knew

stout lads, girls

Trowth, Caesar, whyles they're fash'd enough;
A cottar howkin^a in a sheugh,
Wi' dirty stanes biggin' a dyke,
Baring a quarry, and sic like;
Himself, a wife, he thus sustains,
A smyttrie o' wee duddy weans,
And nought but his han'-darg to keep
Them right and tight in thack and rape.

And when they meet wi' sair disasters,
Like loss o' health, or want o' masters,
Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer
And they maun starve o' cauld and hunger;
But how it comes I never kent yet,
They're maistly wonderfu' contented;
An' buirdly chieels and clever hizzies
Are bred in sic a way as this is.

CAESAR

badger

But then, to see how ye're negleckit,
How huff'd, and cuff'd, and disrespeckit,
Lord, man! our gentry care sae little
For delvers, ditchers and sic cattle;
They gang as saucy by poor folk
As I wad by a stinking brock.

I've noticed, on our Laird's court-day,
An' mony a time my heart's been wae,

Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,	
How they maun thole a factor's snash ;	endure, abuse
He'll stamp and threaten, curse and swear,	
He'll apprehend them ; poind their gear :	seize, property
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,	must
An' hear it a', an' fear an' tremble !	
I see how folk live that hae riches ;	
But surely poor folk maun be wretches !	

LUATH

They're no' sae wretched's ane wad think,	
Though constantly on poortith's brink :	poverty's
They're sae accustom'd wi' the sight,	
The view o't gi'es them little fright.	

Then chance and fortune are sae guided,
 They're aye in less or mair provided ;
 An' though fatigued wi' close employment,
 A blink o' rest's a sweet enjoyment.

The dearest comfort o' their lives,	
Their grushie weans an' faithfu' wives ;	growing
The prattling things are just their pride,	
That sweetens a' their fireside.	

And whyles twalpenny-worth o' nappy	quart of ale
Can mak the bodies unco happy ;	wonderfully
They lay aside their private cares	
To mind the Kirk and State affairs :	
They'll talk o' patronage and priests,	
Wi' kindling fury in their breasts ;	
Or tell what new taxation's comin',	
And ferlie at the folk in Lon'on.	wonder

As bleak-faced Hallowmas returns	
They get the jovial rantin' kirns,	harvest-homes

When rural life o' every station
 Unite in common recreation;
 Love blinks, Wit slaps, and social Mirth
 Forgets there's Care upo' the earth.

That merry day the year begins
 They bar the door on frosty win's;
 The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream,
 And sheds a heart-inspiring steam;
 The luntin' pipe and sneeshin'-mill
 Are handed round wi' right gude-will;
 The canty auld folk crackin' crouse,
 The young anes ranting through the house—
 My heart has been sae fain to see them
 That I for joy hae barkit wi' them.

Still it's owre true that ye hae said,
 Sic game is now owre aften play'd.
 There's mony a creditable stock
 O' decent, honest, fawsont folk,
 Are riven out baith root and branch
 Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench,
 Wha thinks to knit himsel the faster
 In favour wi' some gentle master,
 Wha, aiblins, thrang a-parliamentin',
 For Britain's gude his soul indentin—

CAESAR

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it;
 For Britain's gude!—guid faith! I doubt it!
 Say rather, gaun as Premiers lead him,
 And saying ay or no's they bid him!
 At operas and plays parading,
 Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading.

Or maybe, in a frolic daft,
 To Hague or Calais taks a waft,
 To make a tour, an' tak a whirl,
 To learn *bon ton* an' see the worl'.

There, at Vienna, or Versailles,
 He rives his father's auld entails;
 Or by Madrid he takes the rout,
 To thrum guitars and fecht wi' nowt;
 Or down Italian vista startles,
 Whore-hunting amang groves o' myrtles;
 Then bouses drumly German water,
 To make himsel' look fair and fatter,
 And clear the consequential sorrows,
 Love-gifts of Carnival signoras.
 For Britain's gude!—for her destruction!
 Wi' dissipation, feud, and faction!

splits

fight with bulls
courses

muddy

LUATH

Hech man! dear sirs! is that the gate
 They waste sae mony a braw estate?
 Are we sae foughten and harass'd
 For gear to gang that gate at last?

way

troubled
money, go, way

O would they stay aback frae courts,
 An' please themselves wi' country sports,
 It wad for every ane be better,
 The laird, the tenant, an' the cotter!
 For thae frank, rantin', ramblin' billies,
 Fient haet o' them's ill-hearted fellows:
 Except for breakin' o' their timmer,
 Or speaking lightly o' their limmer,
 Or shootin' o' a hare or moor-cock,
 The ne'er-a-bit they're ill to poor folk.

those
Devil a bit
wasting, timber
mistress

touch

But will ye tell me, Master Caesar?
 Sure great folk's life's a life o' pleasure;
 Nae cauld nor hunger e'er can steer them,
 The very thought o't needna fear them.

CAESAR

sometimes

Lord, man, were ye but whyles where I am,
 The gentles ye wad ne'er envy 'em,

hard

gripes, groans

It's true, they needna starve or sweat,
 Thro' winter's cauld or simmer's heat;
 They've nae sair wark to craze their banes,
 An' fill auld age wi' gripes an' granes:

But human bodies are sic fools,
 For a' their colleges and schools,
 That when nae real ills perplex them,
 They make enow themselves to vex them,
 An' aye the less they hae to sturt them,
 In like proportion less will hurt them.

fret

A country fellow at the plengh,
 His acres till'd, he's right eneugh;
 A country lassie at her wheel,

dozens

Her dizzens done, she's unco weel;
 But gentlemen, an' ladies warst,

positive

Wi' ev'ndown want o' wark are curst.
 They loiter, lounging, lank, and lazy;

devil a bit

Though de'il haet ails them, yet uneasy;
 Their days insipid, dull, and tasteless;
 Their nights unquiet, lang, and restless.
 And e'en their sports, their balls, and races,
 Their galloping through public places;
 There's sic parade, sic pomp and art,
 The joy can scarcely reach the heart.

The men cast out in party matches,	quarrel
Then sowther a' in deep debauches :	solder
Ae night they're mad wi' drink and whoring,	One
Neist day their life is past enduring.	Next
The ladies arm-in-arm, in clusters,	
As great and gracious a' as sisters ;	
But hear their absent thoughts o' ither,	
They're a' run de'il's and jades thegither.	downright
Whyles, owre the wee bit cup and platie,	
They sip the scandal-potion pretty ;	
Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbit leuks,	live-long, crabbed
Pore owre the devil's picture beuks ;	looks
Stake on a chance a farmer's stack-yard,	playing-cards
And cheat like ony unhang'd blackguard.	
There's some exception, man and woman ;	
But this is gentry's life in common.	

By this the sun was out o' sight,	
And darker gloamin' brought the night ;	twilight
The bum-clock humm'd wi' lazy drone,	cockchafer
The kye stood rowtin' i' the loan ;	
When up they gat and shook their lugs,	cattle, lowing,
Rejoiced they werena men but dogs ;	lane
And each took aff his several way,	ears
Resolved to meet some ither day.	

The satirical tendency becomes more evident in *The Holy Fair*. The personifications whom the poet meets on the way to the religious orgy are Superstition, Hypocrisy, and Fun, and symbolize exactly the elements in his treatment—two-thirds satire and one-third humorous sympathy.

The handling of the preachers is in the manner we have already observed in the other ecclesiastical satires, but there is less animus and more vividness. Nothing could be more admirable in its way than the realism of the picture of the congregation, whether at the sermons or at their refreshments; and, as in *Halloween*, the union of the particular and the universal appears in the essential applicability of the psychology to an American camp-meeting as well as to a Scottish sacrament—

There's some are fou o' love divine,
There's some are fou o' brandy,

—not to finish the stanza!

THE HOLY FAIR

*A robe of seeming truth and trust
Hid crafty Observation;
And secret hung, with poison'd crust,
The dirk of Defamation:
A mask that like the gorget show'd,
Dye-varying on the pigeon;
And for a mantle large and broad,
He wrapt him in religion.*

HYPOCRISY A LA MODE.

Upon a simmer Sunday morn, When Nature's face is fair, I walkèd forth to view the corn, An' stuff the caller air.	fresh
The risin' sun, owre Galston muirs, Wi' glorious light was glintin'; The hares were hirplin' down the furrs, The lav'rocks they were chantin' Fu' sweet that day.	limping, furrows larks
As lightsomely I glowr'd abroad, To see a scene sae gay, Three hizzies, early at the road, Cam skelpin' up the way.	stared girls scudding
Twa had manteeles o' dolefu' black, But ane wi' lyart lining; The third, that gaed a wee a-back, Was in the fashion shining Fu' gay that day.	gray went a little
The twa appeared like sisters twin, In feature, form, an' claes; Their visage wither'd, lang an' thin, An' sour as ony slaes: The third cam up, hap-stap-an'-lowp, As light as ony lambie, An' wi' a curchie low did stoop, As soon as e'er she saw me, Fu' kind that day.	sloes hop-step-and- jump curtsey
Wi' bonnet aff, quoth I, 'Sweet lass, I think ye seem to ken me; I'm sure I've seen that bonnie face, But yet I canna name ye.'	

When by the plate we set our nose, Weel heaped up wi' ha'pence, A greedy glow'r Black Bonnet throws, An' we maun draw our tippence. Then in we go to see the show: On ev'ry side they're gath'rin'; Some carryin' deals, some chairs an' stools, An' some are busy bleth'rin' Right loud that day.	the elder
Here stands a shed to fend the show'rs, An' screen our country gentry; There racer Jess an' twa-three whores Are blinkin' at the entry. Here sits a raw o' tittlin' jades, Wi' heavin' breasts an' bare neck, An' there a batch o' wabster lads, Blackguardin' frae Kilmarnock For fun this day.	keep off
Here some are thinkin' on their sins, An' some upo' their claes; Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins, Anither sighs an' prays: On this hand sits a chosen swatch, Wi' screw'd up, grace-proud faces; On that a set o' chaps, at watch, Thrang winkin' on the lasses To chairs that day.	whispering
O happy is that man an' blest! Nae wonder that it pride him! Whase ain dear lass, that he likes best, Comes clinkin' down beside him!	weaver
	clothes
	soiled
	sample
	Busy
	Sits suugly

And his palm
 Unacknowledged

Wi' arm repos'd on the chair-back
 He sweetly does compose him;
 Which, by degrees, slips round her neck,
 An's loof upon her bosom,
 Unkenn'd that day.

climbs to
 Satan
 his own hot

Now a' the congregation o'er
 Is silent expectation;
 For Moodie speels the holy door,
 Wi' tidings o' damnation.
 Should Hornie, as in ancient days,
 'Mang sons o' God present him,
 The very sight o' Moodie's face
 To's ain liet hame had sent him
 Wi' fright that day.

weird
 such

Hear how he clears the points o' faith
 Wi' rattlin' an' wi' thumpin'!
 Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
 He's stampin' an' he's jumpin'!
 His lengthen'd chin, his turned-up snout,
 His eldritch squeal an' gestures,
 O how they fire the heart devout,
 Like cantharidian plaisters,
 On sic a day!

A New Light
 give

But, hark! the tent has chang'd its voice;
 There's peace an' rest nae langer;
 For a' the real judges rise,
 They canna sit for anger.
 Smith opens out his cauld harangues,
 On practice and on morals;
 An' aff the godly pour in thrangs
 To gie the jars an' barrels
 A lift that day.

What signifies his barren shine
 Of moral pow'rs an' reason?
 His English style an' gesture fine
 Are a' clean out o' season.
 Like Socrates or Antonine,
 Or some auld pagan Heathen,
 The moral man he does define,
 But ne'er a word o' faith in
 That's right that day.

In guid time comes an antidote
 Against sic poison'd nostrum;
 For Peebles, frae the water-fit, river-mouth
 Ascends the holy rostrum:
 See, up he's got the word o' God,
 An' meek an' mim has view'd it, prim
 While Common Sense¹ has ta'en the road,
 An' aff, an' up the Cowgate
 Fast, fast, that day.

Wee Miller, neist, the Guard relieves, next
 An' Orthodoxy raibles, rattles by rote
 Tho' in his heart he weel believes
 An' thinks it auld wives' fables:
 But, faith! the birkie wants a Manse, fellow
 So cannilie he hums them; prudently, hum-
 Altho' his carnal wit an' sense hugs
 Like hafflins-wise o'ercomes him nearly half
 At times that day.

Now, butt an' ben, the Change-house fills, outer and inner
 Wi' yill-caup Commentators; rooms
 Here's crying out for bakes an' gills, ale-cup
 An' there the pint-stowp clatters; rolls

¹The rationalism of the New Lights.

- busy While thick an' thrang, an' loud an' lang,
 Wi' logic, an' wi' Scripture,
 They raise a din, that in the end
 Is like to breed a rupture
 O' wrath that day.
- Blessings on Leeze me on drink! it gi'es us mair
 Than either school or college:
 learning It kindles wit, it waukens lair,
 crams, full It pangs us fou o' knowledge.
 small beer Be't whisky gill, or penny wheep,
 Or ony stronger potion,
 It never fails, on drinkin' deep,
 tickle To kittle up our notion
 By night or day.
- The lads an' lasses, blythely bent
 To mind baith saul an' body,
 Sit round the table, weel content,
 An' steer about the toddy.
 stir On this ane's dress, an' that ane's leuk,
 look They're makin' observations;
 corner While some are cosy i' the neuk,
 An' formin' assignations
 To meet some day.
- But now the Lord's ain trumpet touts,
 Till a' the hills are rairin',
 sounds An' echoes back return the shouts;
 roaring Black Russel is na sparinn':
 His piercing words, like Highlan' swords,
 Divide the joints an' marrow;
 His talk o' Hell, where devils dwell,
 Our very 'sauls does harrow'
 Wi' fright that day!

A vast, unbottom'd, boundless pit, Fill'd fou o' lowin' brunstane, Whase ragin' flame, an' scorchin' heat, Wad melt the hardest whiun-stane! The half-asleep start up wi' fear An' think they hear it roarin' When presently it does appear 'Twas but some neebor snorin' Asleep that day.	full, flaming brim stone
'Twad be owre lang a tale to tell How many stories past, An' how they crowded to the yill, When they were a' dismist; How drink gaed round, in cogs an' caups, Among the furms and benches; An' cheese an' bread, frae women's laps, Was dealt about in lunches, An' dawds that day.	ale wooden drinking vessels full portions lumps
In comes a gawsie, gash guidwife, An' sits down by the fire, Syne draws her kebbuck an' her knife; The lasses they are shyer. The auld guidmen, about the grace, Frae side to side they bother, Till some ane by his bonnet lays, An' gi'es them't like a tether, Fu' lang that day.	jolly, sensible Then, cheese rope
Waesucks! for him that gets nae lass, Or lasses that hae naething! Sma' need has he to say a grace, Or melvie his braw claithing!	Alas! make dusty

O wives, be mindfu', ance yoursel
 How bonnie lads ye wanted,
 An' dinna for a kebbuck-heel
 Let lasses be affronted
 On sic a day!

such

Bell-ringer, rope
 swing, toll
 can

Now Clinkumbell, wi' rattlin' tow,
 Begins to jow an' croon;
 Some swagger hame the best they dow,
 Some wait the afternoon.

gaps, lads

At slaps the billies halt a blink,
 Till lasses strip their shoon:

shoes

Wi' faith an' hope, an' love an' drink,
 They're a' in famous tune

chat

For crack that day.

How mony hearts this day converts
 O' sinners and o' lasses!

before

Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane
 As saft as ony flesh is.

There's some are fou o' love divine,
 There's some are fou o' brandy;

fornication

An' mony jobs that day begin,
 May end in houghmagandie

Some ither day.

It must be admitted that, as we pass from poem to poem, Scottish manners are becoming freer, Scottish drink is more potent, Scottish religion is no longer pure and undefiled. Yet the poet

hardly seems to be at a disadvantage. He certainly is no less interesting; he impresses our imaginations and rouses our sympathetic understanding as keenly as ever; there is no abatement of our esthetic relish.

We have seen the Ayrshire peasant alone with his family, at social gatherings, and at church. We have to see him with his cronies and at the tavern. Scotch manners and Scotch religion we know now; it is the turn of Scotch drink. The spirit of that conviviality which was one of Burns's ruling passions, and which in his class helped to color the grayness of daily hardship, was rendered by him in verse again and again: never more triumphantly than in the greatest of his bacchanalian songs, *Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut*. Indeed it would be hard to find anywhere in our literature a more revealing utterance of those effects of alcohol that are not discussed in scientific literature—the joyous exhilaration, the conviction of (comparative) sobriety, the temporary intensification of the feeling of good fellowship. The challenge to the moon is unsurpassable in its unconscious humor. Yet Arnold thought the world of Scotch drink unbeautiful.

WILLIE BREW'D A PECK O' MAUT

malt

O, Willie brew'd a peck o' maut,
And Rob and Allan cam to see;

live-long

Three blyther hearts, that lee-lang night,

would not have,
Christendom

Ye wad na found in Christendie.

drunk

We are na fou', we're nae that fou,

droplet

But just a drappie in our e'e;

crow, dawn

The cock may craw, the day may daw,

brew

And aye we'll taste the barley-bree.

Here are we met, three merry boys,

Three merry boys, I trow, are we;

And mony a night we've merry been,

more

And mony mae we hope to be!

It is the moon, I ken her horn,

shining, sky, high

That's blinkin' in the lift sae hie;

entice

She shines sae bright to wyle us hame,

But, by my sooth! she'll wait a wee.

go

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,

rascal

A cuckold, coward loun is he!

Wha first beside his chair shall fa',

He is the King amang us three!

With greater daring and on a broader canvas Burns has dealt with the same subject in *The Jolly Beggars*. For the literary treatment of the theme he had hints from Ramsay, in whose *Merry Beggars* and *Happy Beggars* groups of half a

dozen male and female characters proclaim their views and join in a chorus in praise of drink. More direct suggestion for the setting of his "cantata" came from a night visit made by the poet and two of his friends to the low alehouse kept by Nancy Gibson ("Poosie Nansie") in Mauchline. The poem was written in 1785, but Burns never published it and seems almost to have forgotten its existence.

It is impossible to exaggerate the unpromising nature of the theme. The place is a den of corruption, the characters are the dregs of society. A group of tramps and criminals have gathered at the end of their day's wanderings to drink the very rags from their backs and wallow in shameless incontinence. An old soldier and a quondam "daughter of the regiment," a mountebank and his tinker sweetheart, a female pickpocket whose Highland bandit lover has been hanged, a fiddler at fairs who aspires to comfort her but is outdone by a tinker, a lame ballad-singer and his three wives, one of whom consoles the fiddler in the face of her husband—such is the choice company. The action is mere by-play, drunken love making; the main point is the songs. They are mostly frank autobiography, all pervaded with

the gaiety that comes from the conviction that being at the bottom, they need not be anxious about falling. Wine, women, and song are their enthusiasms, and only the song is above the lowest possible level.

Such is the sordid material out of which Burns wrought his greatest imaginative triumph. To take the reader into such a haunt and have him pass the evening in such company, not with disgust and nausea but with relish and joy, is an achievement that stands beside the creation of the scenes in the Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap. It is accomplished by virtue of the intensity of the poet's imaginative sympathy with human nature even in its most degraded forms, and by his power of finding utterance for the moods of the characters he conceives. The dramatic power which we have noted in a certain group of the songs here reaches its height, and in making the reader respond to it he avails himself of all his literary faculties. Pungent phrasing, a sense of the squalid picturesque, a humorous appreciation of human weakness, and a superb command of rollicking rhythms—these elements of his equipment are particularly notable. But the whole thing is fused and unified by a wonderful vitality

that makes the reading of it an actual experience. And, though several of the songs are in English, there is no moralizing, no alien note of any kind to jar the perfection of its harmony. Scottish literature had seen nothing like it since Dunbar made the Seven Deadly Sins dance in hell.

THE JOLLY BEGGARS

A CANTATA

Recitativo

When lyart leaves bestrow the yird,	withered, earth
Or, wavering like the baukie bird,	bat
Bedim could Boreas' blast;	
When hailstones drive wi' bitter skyte,	glancing stroke
And infant frosts begin to bite,	
In hoary cranreuch drest;	hoar-frost
Ae night at e'en a merry core	one, gang
O' randie, gangrel bodies	rowdy, vagrant
In Poosie Nansie's held the splore,	carousal
To drink their orra duddies.	spare rags
Wi' quaffing and laughing,	
They ranted an' they sang;	
Wi' jumping an' thumping	
The very girdle rang.	cake-pan
First, niest the fire, in auld red rags,	next
Ane sat, weel brac'd wi' mealy bags,	
An' knapsack a' in order;	
His doxy lay within his arm;	mistress

whisky

leered

flushed with drink

smacking

mouth

alms

hawker's

Wi' usquebae an' blankets warm,

She blinket on her sodger ;

An' aye he gies the tozie drab

The tither skelpin' kiss,

While she held up her greedy gab,

Just like an aumous dish :

Ilk smack still did crack still

Just like a cadger's whip ;

Then, swaggering an' staggering,

He roar'd this ditty up—

*Air*TUNE: *Soldier's Joy*

I am a son of Mars, who have been in many wars,

And show my cuts and scars wherever I come ;

This here was for a wench, and that other in a trench,

When welcoming the French at the sound of the drum.

Lal de dandle, &c.

My 'prenticeship I past where my leader breath'd his last,

When the bloody die was cast on the heights of Abrám ;

And I serv'd out my trade when the gallant game was
play'd,

And the Moro low was laid at the sound of the drum.

I lastly was with Curtis, among the floating batt'ries,

And there I left for witness an arm and a limb :

Yet let my country need me, with Elliot to head me,

I'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum.

And now, tho' I must beg, with a wooden arm and leg,

And many a tattered rag hanging over my bum,

I'm as happy with my wallet, my bottle, and my callet,

As when I used in scarlet to follow a drum.

trull

What tho' with hoary locks I must stand the winter shocks,
 Beneath the woods and rocks oftentimes for a home?
 When the t'other bag I sell, and the t'other bottle tell,
 I could meet a troop of hell at the sound of the drum.

Recitativo

He ended; and the kebars sheuk	rafters shook
Aboon the chorus roar;	Above
While frightened rattons backward leuk,	rats, look
An' seek the benmost bore.	inmost hole
A fairy fiddler frae the neuk,	nook
He skirled out <i>Encore!</i>	shrieked
But up arose the martial chuck,	darling
And laid the loud uproar.	

Air

TUNE: *Sodger Laddie*

I once was a maid, tho' I cannot tell when,
 And still my delight is in proper young men;
 Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie,
 No wonder I'm fond of a sodger laddie.
 Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
 To rattle the thundering drum was his trade;
 His leg was so tight, and his cheek was so ruddy,
 Transported I was with my sodger laddie. soldier

But the godly old chaplain left him in a lurch;
 The sword I forsook for the sake of the church;
 He risked the soul, and I ventur'd the body,—
 'Twas then I prov'd false to my sodger laddie.

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,
 The regiment at large for a husband I got;
 From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
 I askèd no more but a sodger laddie.

But the peace it reduced me to beg in despair,
 Till I met my old boy at a Cunningham fair;
 His rags regimental they flutter'd so gaudy,
 My heart it rejoiced at a sodger laddie.

And now I have liv'd—I know not how long,
 And still I can join in a cup or a song;
 But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
 Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie!

Recitativo

corner	Poor Merry Andrew in the neuk
tinker wench	Sat guzzling wi' a tinkler hizzie;
took	They mind't na wha the chorus teuk, Between themselves they were sae busy.
	At length, wi' drink and courting dizzy,
staggered	He stoitered up an' made a face;
	Then turn'd, an' laid a smack on Grizzy,
Then	Syne tun'd his pipes wi' grave grimace.

Air

TUNE: *Auld Sir Symon*

drunk	Sir Wisdom's a fool when he's fou,
court	Sir Knave is a fool in a session;
	He's there but a 'prentice I trow,
	But I am a fool by profession.

My grannie she bought me a beuk,	book
And I held awa to the school;	went off
I fear I my talent misteuk,	
But what will ye hae of a fool?	have
For drink I would venture my neck;	
A hizzie's the half o' my craft;	wench
But what could ye other expect,	
Of ane that's avowedly daft?	crazy
I ance was tied up like a stirk,	bullock
For civilly swearing and quaffing;	
I ance was abused i' the kirk,	rebuked
For touzling a lass i' my daffin.	rumpling, fun
Poor Andrew that tumbles for sport,	
Let naebody name wi' a jeer;	
There's even, I'm tauld, i' the Court,	
A tumbler ca'd the Premier.	
Observ'd ye yon reverend lad	
Maks faces to tickle the mob?	
He rails at our mountebank squad—	
It's rivalship just i' the job!	
And now my conclusion I'll tell,	
For faith! I'm confoundedly dry;	
The chiel that's a fool for himsel',	fellow
Gude Lord! he's far dafter than I.	

Recitativo

Then niest outspak a raucle carlin,	next, rough
Wha kent fu' weel to cleek the sterling,	heldam
For mony a pursie she had hookit,	steal, cash
An' had in mony a well been dookit;	ducked

woe betide, gal-
lows

fine

Her love had been a Highland laddie,
But weary fa' the waefu' woodie!
Wi' sighs and sobs, she thus began
To wail her braw John Highlandman:—

Air

TUNE: *O An' Ye Were Dead, Guidman*

Lowland

A Highland lad my love was born,
The Lalland laws he held in scorn;
But he still was faithfu' to his clan,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.

CHORUS

Sing hey, my braw John Highlandman!
Sing ho, my braw John Highlandman!
There's no a lad in a' the lan'
Was match for my John Highlandman.

kilt

two-handed sword

With his philibeg an' tartan plaid,
And gude claymore down by his side,
The ladies' hearts he did trepan,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.

We rangèd a' from Tweed to Spey,
And lived like lords and ladies gay;
For a Lalland face he fearèd none,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.

They banish'd him beyond the sea;
But ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman.

CHORUS

I am a fiddler to my trade,
 An' a' the tunes that e'er I play'd,
 The sweetest still to wife or maid,
 Was *Whistle Owre the Lave o't*.

harvest-homes
 we shall

At kirns and weddings we'se be there,
 And oh! sae nicely's we will fare;
 We'll bouse about, till Daddie Care
 Sing *Whistle Owre the Lave o't*.

pick
 wall

Sae merrily the banes we'll pyke,
 An' sun oursels about the dyke,
 An' at our leisure, when ye like,
 We'll—whistle owre the lave o't.

tickle, catgut
 such

But bless me wi' your heav'n o' charms
 An' while I kittle hair on thairms,
 Hunger, cauld, and a' sic harms,
 May whistle owre the lave o't.

Recitativo

tinker

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird,
 As well as poor gut-scraper;

He taks the fiddler by the beard,

rusty

An' draws a roosty rapier—

He swoor, by a' was swearing worth,

plover

To spit him like a pliver,

Unless he would from that time forth

Relinquish her for ever.

Wi' ghastly e'e, poor tweedle-dee
 Upon his hunkers bended, hams
 An' pray'd for grace wi' ruefu' face,
 An' sae the quarrel ended.
 But tho' his little heart did grieve
 When round the tinkler prest her,
 He feign'd to snirtle in his sleeve, snigger
 When thus the caird address'd her :—

Air

TUNE: *Clout the Cauldron*

My bonnie lass, I work in brass,
 A tinkler is my station ;
 I've travell'd round all Christian ground
 In this my occupation ;
 I've ta'en the gold, I've been enroll'd
 In many a noble squadron ;
 But vain they search'd when off I march'd
 To go an' clout the cauldron. patch
 Despise that shrimp, that wither'd imp,
 Wi' a' his noise an' caperin' ;
 An' tak a share wi' those that bear
 The budget and the apron ; tool-bag
 And, by that stoup, my faith an' houp ! hope
 And by that dear Kilbaigie, a kind of whisky
 If e'er ye want, or meet wi' scant, dearth
 May I ne'er weet my craigie. wet, throat

Recitativo

The caird prevail'd—th' unblushing fair
 In his embraces sunk,
 Partly wi' love o'ercome sae sair, so sorely
 An' partly she was drunk.

spirit
 Sir Violino, with an air
 That show'd a man o' spunk,
 Wish'd unison between the pair,
 An' made the bottle clunk
 To their health that night.

urchin
 trick
 hencoop
 spavin
 hobbled, leapt
 yielded them as
 lovers
 gratis
 But hurchin Cupid shot a shaft
 That play'd a dame a shavie;
 The fiddler rak'd her fore and aft,
 Behint the chicken cavie.
 Her lord, a wight of Homer's craft,
 Tho' limpin' wi' the spavie,
 He hirpl'd up, an' lap like daft,
 And shor'd them *Dainty Davie*
 O' boot that night.

enlisted
 He was a care-defying blade
 As ever Bacchus listed;
 Tho' Fortune sair upon him laid,
 His heart she ever miss'd it.
 \ He had nae wish, but—to be glad,
 Nor want but—when he thirsted;
 He hated nought but—to be sad,
 And thus the Muse suggested
 His sang that night.

Air

TUNE: *For A' That, An' A' That*
 I am a bard of no regard
 Wi' gentlefolks, and a' that;
 staring crowd
 But Homer-like, the glowrin' byke,
 Frae town to town I draw that.

CHORUS

For a' that, an' a' that,
 And twice as muckle's a' that; much
 I've lost but ane, I've twa behin',
 I've wife eneugh for a' that.

I never drank the Muses' stank, pond
 Castalia's burn, an' a' that;
 But there it streams, an' richly reams! foams
 My Helicon I ca' that.

Great love I bear to a' the fair,
 Their humble slave, an' a' that;
 But lordly will, I hold it still
 A mortal sin to thraw that. thwart

In raptures sweet this hour we meet
 Wi' mutual love, an' a' that;
 But for how lang the flee may stang, fly, sting
 Let inclination law that. regulate

Their tricks and craft hae put me daft, crazy
 They've ta'en me in, an' a' that;
 But clear your decks, an' *Here's the sex!*
 I like the jads for a' that. jades

For a' that, and a' that,
 And twice as muckle's a' that,
 My dearest bluid, to do them guid,
 They're welcome till't, for a' that. to it

Recitativo

walls

emptied, pokes,
rags
cover, tails

flaming

over, crowd

untie, choose

So sung the bard—and Nansie's wa's
 Shook with a thunder of applause,
 Re-echo'd from each mouth;
 They toom'd their pocks, an' pawn'd their duds.
 They scarcely left to co'er their fuds,
 To quench their lowin' drouth.
 Then owre again the jovial thrang
 The poet did request
 To lowse his pack, an' wale a sang,
 A ballad o' the best;
 He rising, rejoicing,
 Between his twa Deborahs,
 Looks round him, an' found them
 Impatient for the chorus.

*Air**TUNE: Jolly Mortals, Fill Your Glasses*

See the smoking bowl before us,
 Mark our jovial ragged ring;
 Round and round take up the chorus,
 And in raptures let us sing:

CHORUS

A fig for those by law protected!
 Liberty's a glorious feast!
 Courts for cowards were erected,
 Churches built to please the priest.

What is title? what is treasure?
 What is reputation's care?
 If we lead a life of pleasure,
 'Tis no matter how or where!

With the ready trick and fable,
 Round we wander all the day;
 And at night, in barn or stable,
 Hug our doxies on the hay.

mistresses

Does the train-attended carriage
 Thro' the country lighter rove?
 Does the sober bed of marriage
 Witness brighter scenes of love?

Life is all a variorum,
 We regard not how it goes;
 Let them cant about decorum
 Who have characters to lose.

Here's to budgets, bags, and wallets!
 Here's to all the wandering train!
 Here's our ragged brats and callets!
 One and all cry out *Amen!*

wenches

The materials for rebuilding Burns's world are not confined to his explicitly descriptive poems. Much can be gathered from the songs and satires, and there are important contributions in his too scanty essays in narrative. Of these last by far the most valuable is *Tam o' Shanter*. The poem originated accidentally in the request of a certain Captain Grose for local legends to enrich a descriptive work which he was compiling. In Burns's correspondence will be found a prose ac-

count of the tradition on which the poem is founded, and he is supposed to have derived hints for the relations of Tam and his spouse from a couple he knew at Kirkoswald.

It was a happy inspiration that led him to turn the story into verse, for it revealed a capacity which otherwise we could hardly have guessed him to possess. The vigor and rapidity of the action, the vivid sketching of the background, the pregnant characterization, the drollery of the humor give this piece a high place among stories in verse, and lead us to conjecture that, had he followed this vein instead of devoting his later years to the service of Johnson and Thomson, he might have won a place beside the author of the *Canterbury Tales*. He lacked, to be sure, Chaucer's breadth of experience and richness of culture: being far less a man of the world he would never have attained the air of breeding that distinguishes the English poet: but with most of the essential qualities that charm us in Chaucer's stories he was well equipped. He had the observant eye, the power of selection, command of the telling phrase and happy epithet, the sense of the comic and the pathetic. Beyond Chaucer he had

passion and the power of rendering it, so that he might have reached greater tragic depth, as he surpassed him in lyric intensity.

As it is, however, Chaucer stands alone as a story-teller, for *Tam o' Shanter* is with Burns an isolated achievement. There are three distinct elements in the work—narrative, descriptive, and reflective. The first can hardly be overpraised. We are made to feel the reluctance of the hero to abandon the genial inn fireside, with its warmth and uncritical companionship, for the bitter ride with a sulky sullen dame at the end of it; the rage of the thunderstorm, as with lowered head and fast-held bonnet the horseman plunges through it; the growing sense of terror as, past scene after scene of ancient horror, he approaches the ill-famed ruin. Then suddenly the mood changes. Emboldened by his potations, Tam faces the astounding infernal revelry with unabashed curiosity, which rises and rises till, in a pitch of enthusiastic admiration for Cutty-Sark, he loses all discretion and brings the "hellish legion" after him pell-mell. We reach the serio-comic catastrophe breathless but exhilarated.

The descriptive background of this galloping

adventure is skilfully indicated. Each scene—the ale-house, the storm, the lighted church, the witches' dance—is sketched in a dozen lines, every stroke distinct and telling. Even the three lines indicating what waits the hero at home is an adequate picture. Though incidental, these vignettes add substantially to what the descriptive poems have told us of the environment, real and imaginative, in which the poet had been reared.

The value of the reflective element is more mixed. The most quoted passage, that beginning

“But pleasures are like poppies spread,”

can only be regretted. With its literary similes, its English, its artificial diction, it is a patch of cheap silk upon honest homespun. But the other pieces of interspersed comment are all admirable. The ironic apostrophes—to Tam for neglecting his wife's warnings; to shrewish wives, consoling them for their husband's deafness to advice; to John Barleycorn, on the transient courage he inspires; to Tam again, when tragedy seems imminent—are all in perfect tone, and do much to add the element of drollery that mixes so delightfully with the weirdness of the scene. And like the other elements in the poem they are commend-

ably short, for Burns nearly always fulfills Bagehot's requirement that poetry should be "memorable and emphatic, intense, and *soon over*."

TAM O' SHANTER

A TALE

Of Brownie's and of Bogillie's full is this Buke.

GARVIN DOUGLAS.

When chapman billies leave the street,	pedlar fellows
And drouthy neibors neibors meet,	thirsty
As market-days are wearing late,	
An' folk begin to tak the gate;	road
While we sit bousing at the nappy,	ale
An' getting fou and unco happy,	full, mighty
We think na on the lang Scots miles,	
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,	bogs, gaps
That lie between us and our hame,	
Where sits our sulky sullen dame,	
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,	
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.	

This truth fand honest Tam o' Shanter,	found
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter—	one
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses	
For honest men and bonnie lasses).	

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise	
As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!	
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,	told, good-for
A bletherin', blusterin', drunken blellum;	nothing
	chattering,
	babbler

One	That frae November till October,
every meal-grind-	Ae market-day thou was na sober;
ing	That ilka melder wi' the miller
money	Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
nag	That every naig was ca'd a shoe on,
	The smith and thee gat roarin' fou on;
	That at the Lord's house, even on Sunday,
	Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
	She prophesied that, late or soon,
wizards, dark	Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon;
	Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk
	By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.
makes, weep	Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet
	To think how mony counsels sweet,
	How mony lengthen'd sage advices,
	The husband frae the wife despises!
uncommonly	But to our tale: Ae market night,
fireside, blazing	Tam had got planted unco right,
foaming ale	Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Cobbler	Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;
	And at his elbow, Souter Johnny,
	His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
loved	Tam lo'ed him like a very brither;
	They had been fou for weeks thegither.
	The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter,
	And aye the ale was growing better:
	The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
	Wi' favours secret, sweet, and precious;
	The souter tauld his queerest stories;
	The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
roar	The storm without might rair and rustle,
	Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
 E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy.
 As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
 The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure;
 Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
 O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

loads

But pleasures are like poppies spread—
 You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
 Or like the snow falls in the river—
 A moment white, then melts for ever;
 Or like the borealis race,
 That flit ere you can point their place;
 Or like the rainbow's lovely form
 Evanishing amid the storm.
 Nae man can tether time nor tide;
 The hour approaches Tam maun ride;
 That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
 That dreary hour, he mounts his beast in;
 And sic a night he taks the road in;
 As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

such

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
 The rattling show'rs rose on the blast;
 The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
 Loud, deep, and lang, the thunder bellow'd:
 That night, a child might understand,
 The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare, Meg,
 A better never lifted leg,
 Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
 Despising wind, and rain, and fire;

spanked, puddle

song
 staring
 goblins
 ghosts, owls

Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet;
 Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet;
 Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
 Lest bogles catch him unawares.
 Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
 Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.

smothered
 birches, big
 gorse, pile of
 stones
 found
 blaze
 chink

By this time he was cross the ford,
 Where in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;
 And past the birks and meikle stane,
 Where drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
 And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
 Where hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
 And near the thorn, aboon the well,
 Where Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.
 Before him Doon pours all his floods;
 The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
 The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
 Near and more near the thunders roll:
 When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
 Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;
 Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing;
 And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

ale
 whisky
 ale
 farthing

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!
 What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
 Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;
 Wi' usquebae, we'll face the devil!
 The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
 Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle!
 But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,
 Till by the heel and hand admonish'd,

She ventur'd forward on the light;	
And, vow! Tam saw an unco sight!	strange
Warlocks and witches in a dance!	
Nae cotillon brent new frae France,	brand
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,	
Pnt life and mettle in their heels.	
A winnock-bunker in the east,	window-seat
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast—	
A touzie tyke, black, grim, and large!	shaggy dog
To gie them music was his charge:	
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl.	squeal
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.	ring
Coffins stood round like open presses,	
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;	
And by some devilish cantraip sleight	magic trick
Each in its cauld hand held a light,	
By which heroic Tam was able	
To note upon the haly table	holy
A murderer's banes in gibbet-airns;	-irons
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;	
A thief new-cuttet frae the rape—	
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;	
Five tomahawks, wi' blude red rusted;	
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;	
A garter, which a babe had strangled;	
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,	
Whom his ain son o' life bereft—	
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft;	
Wi' mair of horrible and awfu',	
Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.	

As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd, and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:

linked
heldam, steamed
cast, rags, work
tripped deftly,
chemise
those, girls

The piper loud and louder blew;
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
And coost her duddies to the wark,
And linkit at it in her sark!

greasy flannel
These trousers
huttocks
maidens

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,
A' plump and strapping in their teens;
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!¹
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies,
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!

Withered (?),
wean
Leaping, cudgel

But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,
Louping and flinging on a crummock,
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

full well
choice
death
barley
short-shift,
coarse linen
proud

But Tam kent what was what fu' brawlie:
There was ae winsome wench and walie
That night enlisted in the core,
Lang after kent on Carrick shore!
(For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perish'd mony a bonnie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear.)
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.

¹ Woven in a reed of 1,700 divisions.

Ah! little kent thy reverend grannie
 That sark she coft for her wee Nannie bought
 Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches) pounds
 Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!

But here my muse her wing maun cour; stoop
 Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r—
 To sing how Nannie lap and flang, leapt, kicked
 (A souple jade she was, and strang);
 And how Tam stood, like ane bewitch'd,
 And thought his very een enrich'd;
 Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain, fidgeted with
 And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main: fondness
 Till first ae caper, syne anither, jerked
 Tam tint his reason a' thegither, then
 And roars out 'Weel done, Cutty-sark!'
 And in an instant all was dark!
 And scarcely had he Maggie rallied, lost
 When out the hellish legion sallied. Short-shift

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke fret
 When plundering herds assail their byke, herd-boys, nest
 As open pussie's mortal foes the hare's
 When pop! she starts before their nose,
 As eager runs the market-crowd,
 When 'Catch the thief!' resounds aloud;
 So Maggie runs; the witches follow,
 Wi' mony an eldritch skrie and hollo. weird screech

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin'¹
 In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin'
 In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin'
 Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!

¹ Lit., a present from a fair; deserts and something more.

Now do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
 And win the key-stane o' the brig:
 There at them thou thy tail may toss,
 A running stream they darena cross.
 But ere the key-stane she could make,
 devil The fient a tail she had to shake!
 For Nannie, far before the rest,
 Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
 endeavor And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;
 But little wist she Maggie's mettle!
 whole Ae spring brought off her master hale,
 But left behind her ain gray tail:
 clutched The carlin caught her by the rump,
 And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
 Ilk man and mother's son, take heed;
 Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
 Or cutty-sarks rin in your mind,
 Think! ye may buy the joys o'er dear;
 Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

Description in Burns is not confined to man and society; he has much to say of nature, animate and inanimate.

Though within a few miles of the ocean, the scenery among which the poet grew up was inland scenery. He lived more than once by the sea for short periods, yet it appears but little in his verse, and then usually as the great severing element.

And seas between us braid hae roar'd
 Sin auld lang syne

is the characteristic line. Scottish poetry had no tradition of the sea. To England the sea had been the great boundary and defense against the continental powers, and her naval achievements had long produced a patriotic sentiment with regard to it which is reflected in her literature. But Scotland's frontier had been the line of the Cheviots and the Tweed, and save for a brief space under James IV she had never been a sea-power. Thus the cruelty and danger of the sea are almost the only phases prominent in her poetry, and Burns here once more follows tradition.

Again, the scenery of Ayrshire was Lowland scenery, with pastoral hills and valleys. On his Highland tours Burns saw and admired mountains, but they too appear little in his verse. Though not an unimportant figure in the development of natural description in literature, he had not reached the modern deliberateness in the seeking out of nature's beauties for worship or imitation, so that the phases of natural beauty which we find in his poetry are merely those which had unconsciously become fixed in a memory naturally retentive of visual images.

Not only do his natural descriptions deal with the aspects familiar to him in his ordinary surroundings, but they are for the most part treated in relation to life. The thunderstorm in *Tam o' Shanter* is a characteristic example. It is detailed and vivid and is for the moment the center of interest; but it is introduced solely on Tam's account. Oftener the wilder moods of the weather are used as settings for lyric emotion. In *Winter, a Dirge*, the harmony of the poet's spirit with the tempest is the whole theme, and in *My Nannie's Awa* the same idea is treated with more mature art:

Come autumn sae pensive, in yellow and gray,
And soothe me wi' tidings o' nature's decay;
The dark, dreary winter, and wild-driving snaw
Alane can delight me—now Nannie's awa.

Many poems are introduced with a note of the season, even when it has no marked relation to the tone of the poem. *The Cotter's Saturday Night* opens with

November chill blows loud wi' angry sigh;

The Jolly Beggars with

When lyart leaves bestrew the yird;

The Epistle to Davie with

While winds frae off Ben-Lomond blaw,
 An' bar the doors wi' drivin' snaw,

though in this last case it is skilfully used to introduce the theme. These introductions are probably less imitations of the traditional opening landscape which had been a convention since the early Middle Ages, than the natural result of a plowman's daily consciousness of the weather.

For whether related organically to his subject or not, Burns's descriptions of external nature are to a high degree marked by actual experience and observation. Even remembering Thomson in the previous generation and Cowper and Crabbe in his own, we may safely say that English poetry had hardly seen such realism. Its quality will be conceived from a few passages. Take the well-known description of the flood from *The Brigs of Ayr*.

When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains,	all-day
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;	
When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,	
Or stately Lugar's mossy fountains boil,	
Or where the Greenock winds his moorland course,	
Or haunted Garpal draws his feeble source,	
Arous'd by blust'ring winds an' spotting thowes,	thaws
In mony a torrent down the snaw-broo rows;	melted snow rolls

flood

way (to the sea)

devil if

muddy splashes

While crashing ice, borne on the roaring spate,
 Sweeps dams, an' mills, an' brigs, a' to the gate;
 And from Glenbuck, down to the Ralton-key,
 Auld Ayr is just one lengthen'd, tumbling sea;
 Then down ye'll hurl, deil nor ye never rise!
 And dash the gumlie jaup up to the pouring skies!

Any reader familiar with Gavin Douglas's description of a Scottish winter in his Prologue to the twelfth book of the *Æneid* will be struck by the resemblance to this passage both in subject and manner. It is doubtful whether Burns knew more of Douglas than the motto to *Tam o' Shanter*, but from the days of the turbulent bishop in the early sixteenth century down to Burns's own time Scottish poetry had never lost touch with nature, and had rendered it with peculiar faithfulness. It is interesting to note that while *The Brigs of Ayr* is Burns's most successful attempt at the heroic couplet, and though it contains verses that must have encouraged his ambition to be a Scottish Pope, yet it is sprinkled with touches of natural observation quite remote from the manner of that master. Compare, on the one hand, such couplets as these:

Will your poor narrow foot-path of a street,
 Where twa wheel-barrows tremble when they meet,—

and

And tho' wi' crazy eild I'm sair forfairn
I'll be a brig when ye're a shapeless cairn!

old age, sorely
worn-out
heap of stones

and

Forms like some bedlam statuary's dream,
The craz'd creations of misguided whim;

and

As for your priesthood, I shall say but little,
Corbies and clergy are a shot right kittle;

Ravens, sort,
ticklish

couplets of which Pope need hardly have been
ashamed, with such touches of nature as these:

Except perhaps the robin's whistling glee,
Proud o' the height o' some bit half-lang tree:

and

The silent moon shone high o'er tow'r and tree:
The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam,
Crept, gently crusting, owre the glittering stream.

These examples of his power of exact, vigorous, or delicate rendering of familiar sights and sounds may be supplemented with a few from other poems.

O sweet are Coila's haughs an' woods,
When lintwhites chant amang the buds,
And jinkin' hares, in amorous whids,
Their loves enjoy,
While thro' the braes the cushat croods
Wi' wailfu' cry!

intervalles
linnets
dodging, gambols
coos

Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frost on hills of Ochiltree
 Are hoary gray;
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
 Dark'ning the day!

Epistle to William Simpson.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
 As thro' the glen it wimpled;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
 Whyles in a wiel it dimpled;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
 Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
 Below the spreading hazel,
 Unseen that night.

Halloween.

Closely interwoven with Burns's feelings for natural beauty is his sympathy with animals. The frequency of passages of pathos on the sufferings of beasts and birds may be in part due to the influence of Sterne, but in the main its origin is not literary but is an expression of a tender heart and a lifelong friendly intercourse. In this relation Burns most often allows his sentiment to come to the edge of sentimentality, yet in fairness it must be said that he seldom crosses the line. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he

had no need to force the note; it was his instinct both as a farmer and as a lover of animals to think, when he heard the storm rise, how it would affect the lower creation.

List'ning the doors and winnocks rattle,	windows
I thought me on the ourie cattle,	shivering
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle	onset
O' winter war,	
And thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle	-sinking, scramble
Beneath a scar.	

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing!	Each hopping
That, in the merry months o' spring,	
Delighted me to hear thee sing,	
What comes o' thee?	
Where wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,	
An' close thy e'e?	eye

A Winter Night.

A number of his most popular pieces are the expression of this warm-hearted sympathy, a sympathy not confined to suffering but extending to enjoyment of life and sunshine, and at times leading him to the half-humorous, half-tender ascription to horses and sheep of a quasi-human intelligence. Were we to indulge further our conjectures as to what Burns might have done under more favorable circumstances, it would be

easy to argue that he could have ranked with Henryson and La Fontaine as a writer of fables.

TO A MOUSE, ON TURNING HER UP IN HER
NEST WITH THE PLOUGH,
NOVEMBER, 1785

sleek

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,
O what a panic's in thy breastie!

hurrying rush

Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle!

loath

I wad na be laith to rin an' chase thee

plough-staff

Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

odd ear, 24
Is sheaves

I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave

Is

'S a sma' request:

rest

I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,
And never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!	
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'!	frail
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,	
O' foggage green!	
An' bleak December's winds ensuin',	
Baith snell an' keen!	bitter

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
 An' weary winter comin' fast,
 An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
 Thou thought to dwell,
 Till crash! the cruel coulter past
 Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble	stubble
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!	
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,	
But house or hald,	Without, holding
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,	endure
An' cranreuch cauld!	hoar-frost

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,	alone
In proving foresight may be vain:	
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men	
Gang aft a-gley,	Go oft askew
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain	leave
For promis'd joy.	

Still thou art blest compar'd wi' me!
 The present only toucheth thee:
 But och! I backward cast my e'e
 On prospects drear!
 An' forward tho' I canna see,
 I guess an' fear!

TO A LOUSE

ON SEEING ONE ON A LADY'S BONNET AT CHURCH

where are, going,
 wonder

swagger

such

wonder

saint

foot

Go

Quick, temples
 settle

i. e. comb

Ha! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin' ferlie!
 Your impudence protects you sairly:
 I canna say but ye strunt rarely,
 Owre gauze and lace;
 Tho' faith! I fear ye dine but sparely
 On sic a place.

Ye ugly, creepin', blastit wonner,
 Detested, shunn'd by saunt an' sinner!
 How dare ye set your fit upon her,
 Sae fine a lady!
 Gae somewhere else, and seek your dinner
 On some poor body.

Swith! in some beggar's haffet squattle;
 There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle
 Wi' ither kindred, jumping cattle,
 In shoals and nations;
 Whare horn nor bane ne'er dare unsettle
 Your thick plantations.

Now haud ye there! ye're out o' sight,	keep
Below the fatt'rils, snug an' tight;	fal-de-rals
Na, faith ye yet! ye'll no be right	
Till ye've got on it,	
The very tapmost tow'ring height	
O' Miss's bonnet.	
My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out,	
As plump and gray as onie grozet;	gooseberry
O for some rank mercurial rozet,	rosin
Or fell red smeddum!	deadly, dust
I'd gie you sic a hearty doze o't,	
Wad dress your droddum!	breech
I wad na been surpris'd to spy	
You on an auld wife's flannen toy;	flannel cap
Or aiblins some bit duddie boy,	perhaps, ragged
On's wyliecoat;	undervest
But Miss's fine Lunardi! fie,	balloon bonnet
How daur ye do't?	dare
O Jenny, dinna toss your head,	
An' set your beauties a' abroad!	abroad
Ye little ken what cursed speed	
The blastie's makin'!	little wretch
Thae winks and finger-ends, I dread,	Those
Are notice takin'!	
O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us	
To see oursels as others see us!	
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,	
And foolish notion:	
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,	
And ev'n devotion!	

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH A PLOUGH,
IN APRIL, 1786

must

Wee modest crimson-tippèd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neibor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weat
Wi' spreckl'd breast,
When upward springing, blythe to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth
Thy tender form.

walls
shelter

barren

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield,
But thou, beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble-field,
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
 Thy snawy bosom sun-ward spread,
 Thou lifts thy unassuming head
 In humble guise;
 But now the share uptears thy bed,
 And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
 Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade,
 By love's simplicity betray'd,
 And guileless trust,
 Till she like thee, all soil'd, is laid
 Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
 On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd:
 Unskilful he to note the card
 Of prudent lore,
 Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
 And overwhelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering worth is giv'n,
 Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
 By human pride or cunning driv'n
 To mis'ry's brink,
 Till wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n,
 He, ruin'd, sink!

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
 That fate is thine—no distant date;
 Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives elate
 Full on thy bloom,
 Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight
 Shall be thy doom!

THE AULD FARMER'S NEW-YEAR MORNING
SALUTATION TO HIS AULD MARE,
MAGGIE,

ON GIVING HER THE ACCUSTOMED RIPP OF CORN TO
HANSEL IN THE NEW YEAR

welcome with a
present

handful, belly

hollow-backed,
knobby

colt

Across, lea

drooping

glossy

excite

Once

stately, compact,
limber

earth

pool

as dowry

wealth

strong

A guid New-Year I wish thee, Maggie!

Hae, there's a ripp to thy auld baggie:

Tho' thou's howe-backit now, an' knaggie,

I've seen the day,

Thou could hae gane like ony staggie

Out-owre the lay.

Tho' now thou's dowie, stiff, an' crazy,

An' thy auld hide's as white's a daisie,

I've seen thee dappled, sleek, an' glaizie,

A bonnie gray:

He should been tight that daur't to raize thee,

Ance in a day.

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,

A filly buirdly, steeve, an' swank,

An' set weel down a shapely shank,

As e'er tread yird;

An' could hae flown out-owre a stank,

Like ony bird.

It's now some nine-an-twenty year,

Sin' thou was my guid-father's meere;

He gied me thee, o' tocher clear,

An' fifty mark;

Tho' it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear,

An' thou was stark.

When first I gaed to woo my Jenny, Ye then was trottin' wi' your minnie: Tho' ye was trickie, slee, an' funnie, Ye ne'er was donsie; But hamely, tawie, quiet, an' cannie, An' unco sonsie.	mother sly unmanageable tractable, good tempered very attractive
That day ye pranc'd wi' muckle pride When ye bure hame my bonnie bride; An' sweet an' gracefu' she did ride, Wi' maiden air! Kyle-Stewart I could braggèd wide For sic a pair.	much bore have challenged
Tho' now ye dow but hoyte and hobble, An' wintle like a saumont-coble, That day ye was a jinker noble For heels an' win'! An' ran them till they a' did wobble Far, far behin'.	can only halt stagger, salmon boat goer wind
When thou an' I were young and skeigh, An' stable-meals at fairs were driegh, How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skriegh An' tak the road! Town's-bodies ran, and stood abeigh, An' ca't thee mad.	skittish dull snort, neigh aloof
When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow, We took the road aye like a swallow: At brooses thou had ne'er a fellow For pith an' speed; But ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow, Where'er thou gaed.	full of corn wedding-races went

short-rumped
perhaps have beat,
spurt

wheeze

willow

near horse of
hindmost pair
hide or tow traces
eight, going

plunged, stopped,
capered

chest

rooty hillocks,
roared, cracked
fallen gently over

dish
edges

ere

were restive
steepest
leapt, jumped

jogged along

The sma', droop-rumpled, hunter cattle,
Might aiblins waur'd thee for a brattle;
But sax Scotch miles, thou tried their mettle
An' gart them whaizle:
Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle
O' saugh or hazel.

Thou was a noble fittie-lan',
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn!
Aft thee an' I, in aucht hours gaun,
On guid March-weather,
Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han',
For days thegither.

Thou never braindg't, an' fetch't, an' fliskit,
But thy auld tail thou wad hae whiskit,
An' spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket,
Wi' pith an' pow'r,
Till spritty knowes wad rair't and riskit,
An' slypet owre.

When frosts lay lang, an' snaws were deep,
An' threaten'd labour back to keep,
I gied thy cog a wee bit heap
Aboon the timmer;
I kenn'd my Maggie wad na sleep
For that, or simmer.

In cart or car thou never reestit;
The steyst brae thou wad hae faced it;
Thou never lap, an' stenned, an' breastit,
Then stood to blaw;
But, just thy step a wee thing hastit,
Thou snoov't awa.

My pleugh is now thy bairn-time a',	plough-team, issue
Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw ;	
Forbye sax mae I've sell't awa	Besides, more,
That thou hast nurst:	away
They drew me thretteen pund an' twa,	
The very warst.	worst

Mony a sair darg we twa hae wrought,	day's work
An' wi' the weary warl' fought!	
An' mony an anxious day I thought	
We wad be beat!	
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,	
Wi' something yet.	

And think na, my auld trusty servan',	
That now perhaps thou's less deservin',	
An' thy auld days may end in starvin' ;	
For my last fou,	hushel
A heapit stimpert I'll reserve ane	quarter-peck
Laid by for you.	

We've worn to crazy years thegither ;	
We'll toyte about wi' ane anither ;	totter
Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether	attentive, change
To some hain'd rig,	reserved plot
Where ye may nobly rax your leather,	stretch, sides
Wi' sma' fatigue.	

To the evidence of Burns's warm-heartedness supplied by these kindly verses may appropriately be added the *Address to the Deil*. Burns's atti-

tude to the supernatural we have already slightly touched on. Apart from the somewhat vague Deism which seems to have formed his personal creed, the poet's attitude toward most of the beliefs in the other world which were held around him was one of amused skepticism. *Halloween* and *Tam o' Shanter* show how he regarded the grosser rural superstitions; but the Devil was another matter. Scottish Calvinism had, as has been said, made him almost the fourth person in the Godhead; and Burns's thrusts at this belief are among the most effective things in his satire. In the present piece, however, the satirical spirit is almost overcome by kindness and benevolent humor, and few of his poems are more characteristic of this side of his nature.

ADDRESS TO THE DEIL

Hoofie

Splashes, dish
scald

O thou! whatever title suit thee,
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,
Clos'd under hatches,
Spairges about the brunstane cootie,
To scaud poor wretches!

Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,	Hangman
An' let poor damnèd bodies be;	
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,	
Ev'n to a deil,	
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,	spank, scald
An' hear us squeal!	

Great is thy pow'r, an' great thy fame;	
Far kenn'd an' notèd is thy name;	
An', tho' yon lowin' heugh's thy hame,	flaming pit
Thou travels far;	
An' faith! thou's neither lag nor lame,	backward
Nor blate nor scaur.	shy, afraid

Whyles rangin' like a roarin' lion	
For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin';	
Whyles on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin',	
Tirlin' the kirks;	Stripping
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin',	
Unseen thou lurks.	

I've heard my reverend grannie say,	
In lanely glens ye like to stray;	
Or, where auld ruin'd castles gray	
Nod to the moon,	
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way,	
Wi' eldritch croon.	weird

When twilight did my grannie summon	
To say her pray'rs, douce, honest woman!	sedate
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin',	beyond
Wi' eerie drone;	uncanny
Or, rustlin', thro' the boortrees comin',	elders
Wi' heavy groan.	

squinting

pond

clump of rushes

moan

fist

weird, harsh

ragwort

disburied

churn

i. e., the butter

petted, twelve-
pint cow
dry, bullhusbands, cock-
sure
tool

magic

crisis

Ae dreary windy winter night
The stars shot down wi' sklentint' light,
Wi' you mysel I gat a fright

Ayont the lough;
Ye like a rash-buss stood in sight
Wi' waving sough.

The cudgel in my nieve did shake,
Each bristled hair stood like a stake,
When wi' an eldritch stoor 'quaick, quaick,'
Amang the springs,
Awa ye squatter'd like a drake
On whistlin' wings.

Let warlocks grim an' wither'd hags
Tell how wi' you on ragweed nags
They skim the muirs an' dizzy crags
Wi' wicked speed;
And in kirk-yards renew their leagues
Owre howkit dead.

Thence country wives, wi' toil an' pain,
May plunge an' plunge the kirk in vain;
For oh! the yellow treasure's taen
By witchin' skill;
An' dawtit, twal-pint Hawkie's gane
As yell's the bill.

Thence mystic knots mak great abuse
On young guidmen, fond, keen, an' crouse;
When the best wark-lume i' the house,
By cantrip wit,
Is instant made no worth a louse,
Just at the bit.

flurry

smoky rags,
scorched wig
smutty

squinted

holding

loosed, scold
of all

fighting

beat, Lowland

Hoofs

roistering

hurrying

dodging

mend

perhaps

D'ye mind that day, when in a bizz,
Wi' reekit duds, an' reestit gizz,
Ye did present your smoutie phiz
 'Mang better folk,
An' sklented on the man of Uz
 Your spitefu' joke?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
An' brak him out o' house an' hal',
While scabs an' blotches did him gall
 Wi' bitter claw,
An' lows'd his ill-tongu'd wicked scaul,
 Was warst ava?

But a' your doings to rehearse,
Your wily snares an' fetchin' fierce,
Sin' that day Michael did you pierce,
 Down to this time,
Wad ding a' Lallan tongue, or Erse,
 In prose or rhyme.

An' now, auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin',
A certain Bardie's rantin', drinkin',
Some luckless hour will send him linkin'
 To your black pit;
But faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin',
 An' cheat you yet.

But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben!
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
 Still hae a stake:
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
 Ev'n for your sake!

Somewhat akin in nature is *Death and Doctor Hornbook*. The purpose is personal satire, Doctor Hornbook being a real person, John Wilson, a schoolmaster in Tarbolton, who had turned quack and apothecary. The figure of Death is an amazingly graphic creation, with its mixture of weirdness and familiar humor; while the attack on Hornbook is managed with consummate skill. Death is made to complain that the doctor is balking him of his legitimate prey, and the drift seems to be complimentary; when in the last few verses it appears that in compensation Hornbook kills far more than he cures.

DEATH AND DOCTOR HORNBOOK

Some books are lies frae end to end,	
And some great lies were never penn'd:	
Ev'n ministers, they hae been kenn'd,	known
In holy rapture,	
A rousing whid at times to vend,	fib
And nail't wi' Scripture.	

But this that I am gaun to tell,	going
Which lately on a night befell,	
Is just as true's the Deil's in hell	
Or Dublin city:	
That e'er he nearer comes oursel	
'S a muckle pity.	great

village ale, cheer-
ful
full
staggered, heed
clear

The clachan yill had made me canty,
I wasna fou, but just had plenty;
I stacher'd whyles, but yet took tent aye
To free the ditches;
An' hillocks, stanes, an' bushes kent aye
Frae ghaists an' witches.

stare
above

The rising moon began to glowre
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre;
To count her horns, wi' a' my pow'r,
I set mysel;
But whether she had three or four
I cou'd na tell.

secure

I was come round about the hill,
And todlin' down on Willie's mill,
Setting my staff, wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker;
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will,
I took a bicker.

run

meet
put, ghostly dread
across one shoul-
der
hung
-toed fish-spear

I there wi' *Something* does forgather,
That pat me in an eerie swither;
An awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouther,
Clear-dangling, hang;
A three-tae'd leister on the ither
Lay large an' lang.

devil a belly, at all

Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,
For fient a wame it had ava;
And then its shanks,
They were as thin, as sharp an' sma'
As cheeks o' branks.

sides of an ox's
hridle

'Guid-een,' quo' I; 'Friend! hae ye been mawin, When ither folk are busy sawin?' It seem'd to mak a kind o' stan', But naething spak; At length says I, 'Friend, wh'are ye gaun? Will ye go back?'	Good-evening, mowing sowing
It spak right howe: 'My name is Death, But be na fley'd.'—Quoth I, 'Guid faith, Ye're maybe come to stap my breath; But tent me, billie: I red ye weel, tak care o' skaith, See, there's a gully!'	hollow frightened heed, fellow advise, harm hig knife
'Gudeman,' quo' he, 'put up your whittle, I'm no design'd to try its mettle; But if I did—I wad be kittle To be mislear'd— I wad na mind it, no that spittle Out-owre my beard.'	knife ticklish if mischievous Over
'Weel, weel!' says I, 'a bargain be't; Come, gies your hand, an' sae we're gree't; We'll ease our shanks an' tak a seat— Come, gies your news; This while ye hae been mony a gate, At mony a house.'	give us, agreed road
'Ay, ay!' quo' he, an' shook his head, 'It's e'en a lang, lang time indeed Sin' I began to nick the thread, An' choke the breath: Folk maun do something for their bread, An' sae maun Death.	must

well-nigh
butchering

stop, scare

worst

village

second stomach,
tobacco pouch
(Author of *Domestic Medicine*)

children

poke

'Sax thousand years are near-hand fled,
Sin' I was to the butchering bred;
An' mony a scheme in vain's been laid
To stap or scaur me;
Till ane Hornbook's ta'en up the trade,
An' faith! he'll waur me.

'Ye ken Jock Hornbook i' the clachan—
Deil mak his king's-hood in a spleuchan!
He's grown sae well acquaint wi' Buchan
An' ither chaps,
The weans haud out their fingers laughin',
And pouk my hips.

'See, here's a scythe, and there's a dart—
They hae pierc'd mony a gallant heart;
But Doctor Hornbook, wi' his art
And curs'd skill,
Has made them baith no worth a fart!
Damn'd haet they'll kill.

Devil a thing

last night

''Twas but yestreen, nae farther gane,
I threw a noble throw at ane—
Wi' less, I'm sure, I've hundreds slain—
But deil-ma-care!

rang, bone

It just play'd dirl on the bane,
But did nae mair.

'Hornbook was by wi' ready art,
And had sae fortified the part
That, when I lookèd to my dart,
It was sae blunt,
Fient haet o't wad hae pierc'd the heart
O' a kail-runt.

Devil a bit
cabbage-stalk

'I drew my scythe in sic a fury
 I near-hand cowpit wi' my hurry, upset
 But yet the bauld Apothecary
 Withstood the shock;
 I might as weel hae tried a quarry
 O' hard whin rock.

'E'en them he canna get attended,
 Altho' their face he ne'er had kenn'd it,
 Just sh— in a kail-blade, and send it, cabbage-leaf
 As soon's he smells't,
 Baith their disease, and what will mend it,
 At once he tells't.

'And then a' doctor's saws and whittles,
 Of a' dimensions, shapes, an' mettles,
 A' kinds o' boxes, mugs, an' bottles,
 He's sure to hae;
 Their Latin names as fast he rattles
 As A B C.

'*Calces* o' fossils, earths, and trees;
 True *sal-marinum* o' the seas;
 The *farina* of beans and pease,
 He has't in plenty;
Aqua-fortis, what you please,
 He can content ye.

'Forbye some new uncommon weapons,— Besides
Urinus spiritus of capons;
 Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings,
 Distill'd *per se*;
Sal-alkali o' midge-tail clippings,
 And mony mae.' more

the grave-digger's	'Wae's me for Johnny Ged's Hole now,'
those	Quoth I, 'if that thae news be true!
grazing-plot, daisies	His braw calf-ward whare gowans grew Sae white and bonnie,
split	Nae doubt they'll rive it wi' the plew; They'll ruin Johnie!
groaned, weird	The creature grain'd an eldritch laugh, And says: 'Ye needna yoke the pleugh, Kirk-yards will soon be till'd eneugh, Tak ye nae fear;
ditch	They'll a' be trench'd wi' mony a sheugh In twa-three year.
straw (<i>i. e.</i> , bed)	'Where I kill'd ane, a fair strae-death, By loss o' blood or want o' breath,
oath	This night I'm free to tak my aith That Hornbook's skill
cloth	Has clad a score i' their last claith, By drap and pill.
weaver by	'An honest wabster to his trade,
fists	Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel-bred Gat tippence-worth to mend her head When it was sair;
aching	The wife slade cannie to her bed,
slid quietly	But ne'er spak mair.
botts	'A country laird had ta'en the batts,
commotion	Or some curmurring in his guts, His only son for Hornbook sets, An' pays him well:
pet-cwes	The lad, for twa guid gimmer-pets, Was laird himsel.

'A bonnie lass, ye kenn'd her name,
 Some ill-brewn drink had hov'd her wame; raised, belly
 She trusts hersel, to hide the shame,
 In Hornbook's care;
 Horn sent her aff to her lang hame,
 To hide it there.

'That's just a swatch o' Hornbook's way; sample
 Thus goes he on from day to day,
 Thus does he poison, kill an' slay,
 An's weel pay'd for't;
 Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey
 Wi' his damn'd dirt.

'But, hark! I'll tell you of a plot,
 Tho' dinna ye be speaking o't;
 I'll nail the self-conceited sot
 As dead's a herrin':
 Niest time we meet, I'll wad a groat, Next, wager
 He gets his fairin'!

But, just as he began to tell,
 The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell struck
 Some wee short hour ayont the twal, beyond, twelve
 Which rais'd us baith: got us to our feet
 I took the way that pleas'd mysel,
 And sae did Death.

A few miscellaneous poems remain to be quoted. These do not naturally fall into any of the major classes of Burns's work, yet are too

important either for their intrinsic worth or the light they throw on his character and genius to be omitted. The Elegies, of which he wrote many, following, as has been seen, the tradition founded by Sempill of Beltrees, may be exemplified by *Tam Samson's Elegy* and that on Captain Matthew Henderson. Special phases of Scottish patriotism are expressed in *Scotch Drink*, and the address *To a Haggis*; while more personal is *A Bard's Epitaph*. In this last we have Burns's summing up of his own character, and it closes with his recommendation of the virtue he strove after but could never attain.

TAM SAMSON'S ELEGY

twisted	Has auld Kilmarnock seen the deil? Or great Mackinlay thrawn his heel? Or Robertson again grown weel, To preach an' read?
worse, everybody	'Na, waur than a' I' cries ilka chiel, 'Tam Samson's dead!
groan	Kilmarnock lang may grunt an' grane,
weep alone	An' sigh, an' sab, an' greet her lane,
clothe, child	An' cleed her bairns, man, wife, an' wean, In mourning weed;
rent in kind	To death, she's dearly paid the kane,— Tam Samson's dead!

The Brethren o' the mystic level	
May hing their head in woefu' bevel,	slope
While by their nose the tears will revel,	
Like ony bead;	
Death's gien the Lodge an unco devel,—	stunning blow
Tam Samson's dead!	

When Winter muffles up his cloak,	
And binds the mire like a rock;	
When to the loughs the curler's flock	ponds
Wi' gleesome speed,	
Wha will they station at the cock?	mark
Tam Samson's dead!	

He was the king o' a' the core	gang
To guard, or draw, or wick a bore, ¹	
Or up the rink like Jehu roar	
In time o' need;	
But now he lags on Death's hogscore, ² —	
Tam Samson's dead!	

Now safe the stately sawmont sail,	salmon
And trouts bedropp'd wi' crimson hail,	
And eels weel kent for souple tail,	
And geds for greed,	pikes
Since dark in Death's fish-creel we wail	
Tam Samson dead!	

¹ In curling, to *guard* is to protect one stone by another in front; to *draw* is to drive a stone into a good position by striking it with another; to *wick a bore* is to hit a stone obliquely and send it through between two others.

² The line a curling stone must cross to stay in the game.

whirring part-
ridges
leg-plumed, con-
fidently
bares, tail

Rejoice, ye birring pairicks a';
Ye cootie moorcocks, crouselly craw;
Ye maukins, cock your fud fu' braw,
Withouten dread;
Your mortal fae is now awa',—
Tam Samson's dead!

attire

That woefu' morn be ever mourn'd
Saw him in shootin graith adorn'd,
While pointers round impatient burn'd,
Frae couples freed;
But oh! he gaed and ne'er return'd!
Tam Samson's dead!

brooks, lakes
broad
weeping

In vain auld age his body batters;
In vain the gout his ancles fetters;
In vain the burns cam down like waters,
An acre braid!
Now ev'ry auld wife, greetin', clatters
'Tam Samson's dead!'

moss

Owre mony a weary hag he limpit,
An' aye the tither shot he thumpit,
Till coward Death behin' him jumpit
Wi' deadly feide;

feud

blast

Now he proclaims, wi' tout o' trumpet,
'Tam Samson's dead!'

When at his heart he felt the dagger,
He reel'd his wonted bottle-swagger,
But yet he drew the mortal trigger
Wi' weel-aim'd heed;
'Lord, five!' he cried, an' owre did stagger
Tam Samson's dead!

Ilk hoary hunter mourn'd a brither;
Ilk sportsman youth bemoan'd a father;
Yon auld grey stane, among the heather,

Marks out his head.

Where Burns has wrote, in rhyming blether,
‘Tam Samson’s dead!’

nonsense

There low he lies in lasting rest;
Perhaps upon his mould'ring breast
Some spitfu' muirfowl bigs her nest,
To hatch and breed;
Alas! nae mair he'll them molest!
Tam Samson's dead!

builds

When August winds the heather wave,
And sportsmen wander by yon grave,
Three volleys let his memory crave
O' pouter an' lead,
Till Echo answer frae her cave
'Tam Samson's dead!'

powder

'Heav'n rest his saul, where'er he be!
 Is th' wish o' mony mae than me:
 He had twa fauts, or maybe three,
 Yet what remead?
 Ae social honest man want we:
 Tam Samson's dead!

more

remedy

One

THE EPITAPH

Tam Samson's weel-worn clay here lies:
Ye canting zealots, spare him!
If honest worth in heaven rise,
Ye'll mend ere ye win near him.

Per Contra

	Go, Fame, an' canter like a filly
nooks	Thro' a' the streets an' neuks o' Killie,
fellow	Tell ev'ry social honest billie
	To cease his grievin',
unharm'd, nimble	For yet, unskaith'd by Death's gleg gullie,
knife	Tam Samson's livin'!

ELEGY ON CAPT. MATTHEW HENDERSON,

A GENTLEMAN WHO HELD THE PATENT FOR HIS HONOURS
IMMEDIATELY FROM ALMIGHTY GOD

	O Death! thou tyrant fell and bloody!
big, gallows-rope	The meikle devil wi' a woodie
Drag, smithy	Haur! thee hame to his black smiddie
hedgehog	O'er hurcheon hides;
anvil	And like stock-fish come o'er his studdie
	Wi' thy auld sides!
gone	He's gane, he's gane! he's frae us torn,
one	The ae best fellow e'er was born!
	Thee, Matthew, Nature's sel' shall mourn
	By wood and wild,
	Where, haply, Pity strays forlorn,
	Frae man exil'd.
stars	Ye hills, near neighbors o' the starns,
mounds	That proudly cock your cresting cairns!
eagles	Ye cliffs, the haunts of sailing earns,
	Where echo slumbers!
children	Come join, ye Nature's sturdiest bairns,
	My wailing numbers!

Mourn, ilka grove the cushat kens!	each, dove
Ye haz'ly shaws and briery dens!	woods
Ye burnies, wimplin' down your glens,	winding
Wi' toddlin din,	
Or foaming strang wi' hasty stens	heaps
Frae lin to lin.	fall
Mourn, little harebells o'er the lea;	
Ye stately foxgloves fair to see;	
Ye woodbines hanging bonnilie,	
In scented bow'rs;	
Ye roses on your thorny tree,	
The first o' flow'rs.	
At dawn when ev'ry grassy blade	
Droops with a diamond at his head,	
At ev'n when beans their fragrance shed	
I' th' rustling gale,	
Ye maukins, whiddin' thro' the glade,	hares, scudding
Come join my wail.	
Mourn, ye wee songsters o' the wood;	
Ye grouse that crap the heather bud;	crop
Ye curlews calling thro' a clud;	cloud
Ye whistling plover;	
And mourn, ye whirring paitrick brood—	partridge
He's gane for ever!	
Mourn, sooty coots, and speckled teals;	
Ye fisher herons, watching eels;	
Ye duck and drake, wi' airy wheels	
Circling the lake;	
Ye bitterns, till the quagmire reels,	
Rair for his sake.	Boom

corncrakes

Mourn, clamouring craiks at close o' day,
 'Mang fields o' flowering clover gay;
 And, when ye wing your annual way

those

Frae our cauld shore,
 Tell thae far warlds wha lies in clay,
 Wham we deplore.

owls

haunted

stare

Ye houlets, frae your ivy bow'r
 In some auld tree, or eldritch tow'r,
 What time the moon wi' silent glow'r
 Sets up her horn,
 Wail thro' the dreary midnight hour

wakeful

Till waukrife morn!

cheerful

O rivers, forests, hills, and plains!
 Oft have ye heard my canty strains;
 But now, what else for me remains
 But tales of woe?

eyes

Must

And frae my een the drapping rains
 Maun ever flow.

catch

Mourn, Spring, thou darling of the year!
 Ilk cowslip cup shall kep a tear:
 Thou, Simmer, while each corny spear
 Shoots up its head,
 Thy gay green flow'ry tresses shear
 For him that's dead!

Thou, Autumn, wi' thy yellow hair,
 In grief thy sallow mantle tear!
 Thou, Winter, hurling thro' the air
 The roaring blast,
 Wide o'er the naked world declare
 The worth we've lost!

Mourn him, thou sun, great source of light!
 Mourn, empress of the silent night!
 And you, ye twinkling starnies bright,
 My Matthew mourn!
 For through your orbs he's ta'en his flight,
 Ne'er to return.

starlets

O Henderson! the man! the brother!
 And art thou gone, and gone for ever?
 And hast thou crost that unknown river,
 Life's dreary bound?
 Like thee, where shall I find another,
 The world around?

Go to your sculptur'd tombs, ye great,
 In a' the tinsel trash o' state!
 But by thy honest turf I'll wait,
 Thou man of worth!
 And weep the ae best fellow's fate
 E'er lay in earth.

SCOTCH DRINK

*Gie him strong drink, until he wink,
 That's sinking in despair;
 An' liquor guid to fire his bluid,
 That's prest wi' grief an' care;*

*There let him bouse, an' deep carouse,
 Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,
 Till he forgets his loves or debts,
 An' minds his griefs no more.*

SOLOMON (Proverbs xxxi. 6, 7).

ear
barley

Let other Poets raise a fracas
'Bout vines, an' wines, an' drunken Bacchus,
An' crabbed names an' stories wrack us,
An' grate our lug;
I sing the juice Scotch bear can mak us,
In glass or jug.

winding, dodge
cream
foam

O thou, my Muse! guid auld Scotch Drink,
Whether thro' wimplin worms thou jink,
Or, richly brown, ream owre the brink,
In glorious faem,
Inspire me, till I lisp an' wink,
To sing thy name!

flat river-lands
oats, bearded

Let husky wheat the haughs adorn,
An' aits set up their awnie horn,
An' pease an' beans at een or morn,
Perfume the plain;
Commend me to
Leeze me on thee, John Barleycorn,
Thou King o' grain!

chews, cud
soft cakes, choice

On thee aft Scotland chows her cood,
In souple scones, the wale o' food!
Or tumblin' in the boiling flood
Wi' kail an' beef;
But when thou pours thy strong heart's blood,
There thou shines chief.

belly

Food fills the wame, an' keeps us livin';
Tho' life's a gift no worth receivin',
But, oil'd by thee,
careering
The wheels o' life gae down-hill, scrievin'
Wi' rattlin' glee.

Thou clears the head o' doited Lear :
 Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care ;
 Thou strings the nerves o' Labour sair,
 At's weary toil :
 Thou even brightens dark Despair
 Wi' gloomy smile.

muddled Learning : : :

Aft, clad in massy siller weed,
 Wi' gentles thou erects thy head ;
 Yet humbly kind, in time o' need,
 The poor man's wine,
 His wee drap parritch, or his bread,
 Thou kitchens fine.

makest palatable

Thou art the life o' public haunts ;
 But thee, what were our fairs and rants ?
 Ev'n godly meetings o' the saunts,
 By thee inspir'd,
 When gaping they besiege the tents,
 Are doubly fir'd.

Without, frolics
 saints

That merry night we get the corn in !
 O sweetly then thou reams the horn in !
 Or reekin' on a New-Year mornin'
 In cog or bicker,
 An' just a wee drap sp'ritual burn in,
 An' gusty sucker !

foamest
 smoking
 bowl, cup
 whisky
 tasty sugar

When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
 An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith,
 O rare to see thee fizz an' freath
 I' th' luggèd caup !
 Then Burnewin comes on like death
 At ev'ry chaup.

implements
 froth
 two-eared cup
 The Blacksmith
 blow

iron
bony, fellow

Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel;
The brawnie, banie, ploughman chiel,
Brings hard owre-hip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer,
Till block an' studdie ring an' reel
Wi' dinsome clamour.

squalling babies

When skirlin' weanies see the light,
Thou maks the gossips clatter bright
How fumblin' cuifs their dearies slight—
Wae worth the name!

Midwife
small coin

Nae Howdie gets a social night,
Or plack frae them.

lawsuit
mad
-brew

When neibors anger at a plea,
An' just as wud as wud can be,
How easy can the barley-bree
Cement the quarrell!
It's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee
To taste the barrel.

blame
throat

Alake! that e'er my Muse has reason
To wyte her countrymen wi' treason;
But mony daily weet their weasan'
Wi' liquors nice,
An' hardly, in a winter's season,
E'er spier her price.

illness
Robs, stupid,
drunken oaf

Wae worth that brandy, burning trash!
Fell source o' mony a pain an' brash!
Twins mony a poor, doylt, drucken hash,
O' half his days;
An' sends, beside, auld Scotland's cash
To her warst faes.

Those
stills

spies
brimstone

Thae curst horse-leeches o' th' Excise,
Wha mak the whisky stells their prize—
Haud up thy hand, deil! Ance—twice—thrice!
There, seize the blinkers!
An' bake them up in brunstane pies
For poor damn'd drinkers.

Whole breeches,
oatmeal cake
plenty

Fortune! if thou'll but gie me still
Hale breeks, a bannock, and a gill,
An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will,
Tak' a' the rest,
An' deal'd about as thy blind skill
Directs thee best.

TO A HAGGIS

jolly

Above
Paunch, guts
worthy

Fair fa' your honest sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the puddin'-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye wordy o' a grace
As lang's my arm.

buttocks
skewer

The groaning trencher there ye fill,
Your hurdies like a distant hill;
Your pin wad help to mend a mill
In time o' need;
While thro' your pores the dews distil
Like amber bead.

His knife see rustic Labour dight, An' cut you up wi' ready sleight, Trenching your gushing entrails bright Like ony ditch; And then, O what a glorious sight, Warm-reekin', rich!	wipe skill -smoking
Then, horn for horn they stretch an' strive, Deil tak the hindmost! on they drive, Till a' their weel-swallow'd kytes belyve Are bent like drums; Then auld guidman, maist like to rive, 'Be-thankit!' hums.	spoon well-swelled bel lies soon burst
Is there that o'er his French <i>ragout</i> , Or <i>olio</i> that wad staw a sow, Or <i>fricassee</i> wad mak her spew Wi' perfect sconner, Looks down wi' sneering scornfu' view On sic a dinner?	sicken disgust
Poor devil! see him owre his trash, As feckless as a wither'd rash, His spindle shank a guid whip-lash, His nieve a nit: Thro' bloody flood or field to dash, O how unfit!	feeble, rush fist, nut
But mark the Rustic, haggis-fed— The trembling earth resounds his tread! Clap in his wallee nieve a blade, He'll mak it whistle; An' legs, an' arms, an' heads will sned, Like taps o' thrissle.	ample fist crop thistle

watery stuff
splashes, por-
ringers

Ye Pow'rs, wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware
That jaups in luggies;
But, if ye wish her gratefu' prayer,
Gie her a Haggis!

A BARD'S EPITAPH

Too
bashful, cringe
woe

Is there a whim-inspirèd fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this aréa throng,
O, pass not by!
But, with a frater-feeling strong,
Here heave a sigh.

Is there a man whose judgment clear,
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,
Wild as the wave;
Here pause—and, thro' the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below
 Was quick to learn and wise to know,
 And keenly felt the friendly glow,
 And softer flame;
 But thoughtless follies laid him low,
 And stain'd his name!

Reader, attend! whether thy soul
 Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
 Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
 In low pursuit;
 Know prudent, cautious self-control
 Is wisdom's root.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

WE have now examined in some detail the main facts of Burns's personal life and literary production: it is time to sum these up in order to realize the character of the man and the value of the work.

Certain fundamental qualities are easily traced to his parentage. The Burnses were honest, hard-working people, stubborn fighters for independence, with intellectual tastes above the average of their class. These characteristics the poet inherited. With all his failures in worldly affairs, he contrived to pay his debts; however obliged to friends and patrons for occasional aid, he never abated his self-respect or became the hanger-on of any man; and he showed throughout his life an eager, receptive, and ever-expanding mind. The seed sown by his father with so much pains and care in his early training fell on fruitful soil, and in the range of his information,

as well as in his critical and reasoning powers, Burns became the equal of educated men. The love of independence, indeed, was less a family than a national passion. The salient fact in the history of Scotland is the intensity of the prolonged struggle against the political domination of England; and there developed in the individual life of the Scot a corresponding tendency to value personal freedom as the greatest of treasures. The thrift and economy for which the Scottish people are everywhere notable, and which has its vicious excess in parsimony and nearness, is in its more honorable aspects no end in itself but merely a means to independence. If they are keen to "gather gear,"

It's no to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train-attendant,
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent,

Along with these substantial and admirable qualities of integrity and independence Burns inherited certain limitations. In the peasant class in which he was born and reared, the fierceness of the struggle for existence has crowded out some of the more beautiful qualities that need ease and

leisure for their development. The virtues of chivalry do indeed at times appear among the very poor, but they are the characteristic product of a class in which conditions are more generous, the necessities of life are taken for granted, and the elemental demands of human nature are satisfied without competitive striving. When a peasant is chivalrous he is so by virtue of some individual quality, and in spite of rather than because of the spirit of his class. Burns was too acute and too observant not to gather much from the social ideals of the ladies and gentlemen with whom he came in contact, and what he gathered affected his conduct profoundly; but at times under stress of frustrated passion or mortified vanity he reverted to the ruder manners of the peasantry from which he sprang. So have to be accounted for certain brutalities in his treatment of the women who loved him or who had been unwise enough to yield to his fascination.

Other characteristics belong to him individually rather than to his family or class or nation. He was to an extraordinary degree proud and sensitive. He reacted warmly to kindness, and showed his gratitude without stint; but he al-

lowed no man to presume upon the obligations he had conferred. He was very conscious of difference of rank, and never sought to ignore it, however little he thought it mattered in comparison with intrinsic merit. But the very degree to which he was aware of the social gap between him and many of his acquaintances put him ever on the alert for slights; and when he perceived or imagined that he had received them, his indignation was sometimes less than dignified and often excessive. Though he knew that he possessed uncommon gifts, he was essentially modest in fact as well as in appearance, and on the whole underestimated his genius.

He had a warm heart, and in his relations with his equals he was genial and friendly. His love of his kind manifested itself especially in his delight in company, a delight naturally heightened by the enjoyment of the sense of leadership which his superior wit and brilliance gave him in almost any society. The customs of the time associated to an unfortunate degree hard drinking with social intercourse. But more than the whisky he enjoyed the loosening of self-consciousness and the warmth of conviviality that it brought.

not that

give

wit

liquor enough

It's no I like to sit an' swallow,
Then like a swine to puke an' wallow;
But gie me just a true guid fellow
Wi' right ingine,
And spunkie ance to mak us mellow,
An' then we'll shine!

Burns was not a drunkard. He seems to have taken little alone, and in the houses of some of his more fashionable friends he resented the pressure to drink more than he wanted. Nor did he allow dissipation to interfere with his work on the farm, or his duties in the excise. Yet, even when contemporary manners have received their share of responsibility, it must be allowed that on the poet's own confession he drank frequently to excess, and that this abuse had a serious share in the breakdown of his constitution, weakened as it was by the excessive toil of his youth.

He was fond of women, and this passion more than any other has been the center of the disputes that have raged round his life and character. Again, contemporary and class customs have to be taken into account. In spite of the formal disapproval of public opinion and the censure of the church, the attitude of his class in the end of the eighteenth century toward such irregulari-

ties as brought Burns and Jean Armour to the stool of repentance was much less severe than it would be in this country to-day. Burns himself knew he was culpable, but the comparative laxity of the standards of the time made it easier for him to forgive himself, and prompted him to defiance when he believed himself criticized by puritan hypocrites. Thus in his utterances we have a curious inconsistency, his feeling ranging from black remorse and melancholy, through half-hearted excuse and justification, to swaggering bravado. And none of them makes pleasant reading.

But his relations with the other sex were not all of the nature of sheer passion. He was capable of serious friendship, warm respect, abject adoration, and a hundred other variations of feeling; and in several cases he maintained for years, by correspondence and occasional visits, an intercourse with ladies on which no shadow of a stain has ever been cast. Such were his relations with Margaret Chalmers and Mrs. Dunlop. These facts have no controversial bearing, but they are necessary to be considered if we are to have a complete view of Burns's relations to society.

In estimating him as a poet, nothing is lost in

keeping in mind the historical relations which have been so strongly emphasized in recent years. He himself would have been the last to resent being placed in a national tradition, but, on the contrary, would have been proud to be regarded as the last and greatest of Scottish vernacular poets. Patriotic feeling is frequent in his verse; we have seen how consciously he performed his work for Johnson and Thomson as a service to his country; and to the "Guidwife of Wauchope House" he professed, speaking of his youth,

E'en then, a wish (I mind its pow'r),
A wish that from my latest hour
 Shall strongly heave my breast,
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake
Some usefu' plan or book could make,
 Or sing a sang at least.

So in the line of the Scottish "makers" we place him, the inheritor of the speech of Henryson and Dunbar, of the meters and modes of Montgomery and the Sempills, Ramsay and Fergusson, the re-creator of the perishing relics of the lost masters of popular song.

His relation to his English predecessors need not again be detailed, so little of value did they contribute to the vital part of his work. But

some account should be taken of his connection with the English literature of his own and the next generation.

The humanitarian movement was well under way before the appearance of Burns, and the particular manifestations of it in, for example, the poems of Cowper on animals, owed nothing to the influence of Burns. But Cowper's hares never appealed to the popular heart with the force of Burns's sheep and mice and dogs, and the tender familiarity and wistful jocoseness of his poems to beasts have never been surpassed. In writing these he was probably, consciously or unconsciously, affected by the tendency of the time, as he was also in the democratic brotherhood of *A Man's a Man for a' That*, but, in both cases, as we have seen, part of the impulse, that part that made his utterance reach his audience, was derived from his personal intercourse with his farm stock and from his inborn conviction of the dignity of the individual. His relations to these elements in the thought and feeling of his day were, then, reciprocal: they strengthened certain traits in his personality, and he passed them on to posterity, strengthened in turn by his moving expression.

The situation is similar with regard to his connection with the so-called "return to nature" in English poetry. Historians have discerned a new era begun in descriptive poetry with Thomson's *Seasons*; and in Cowper again, to ignore many intermediates, there is abundance of faithful portraiture of landscape. But Burns was not given to set description of their kind, and what he has in common with them lies in the nature of his detail—the frank actuality of the images of wind and weather, burn and brae, which form the background of his human comedy and tragedy. He observed for himself, and he called things by their own names. In so doing he was once more following a national tradition, so that he was not "returning" to nature, since the tradition had never left it; but, on the other hand, it is reasonable to suppose that Wordsworth, arriving at a somewhat similar method by a totally different route, found corroboration for his theories of the simplification needed in the matter and diction of poetry in the success of the Scottish rustic who showed his youth

How Verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth.

Wordsworth, of course, like the most distinguished of his romantic contemporaries, found much in nature that Burns never dreamed of; and even the faithfulness in detail which Burns shared with these poets reached a point of subtlety and sensuousness far beyond the reach of his simple and direct epithets. Nature was to be given in the next generation a vast and novel variety of spiritual significance. With all that Burns had nothing to do. He was realist, not romanticist, though his example operated beneficently and sanely on some of the romantic leaders.

Yet in Burns's treatment of nature there is imaginative beauty as well as humble truth. His language in description, though not mystical or highly idealized, is often rich in feeling, and his personality was potent enough to pervade his most objective writing. Thus he ranks among those who have put lovers of poetry under obligation for a fresh glimpse of the beauty and meaning of the world around them. This glimpse is so strongly suggestive of the poet that our delight in it will largely depend on our sympathy with his temperament; yet now and again he flashes out a phrase whose imaginative value is absolute,

and which makes its appeal without respect to the author :

The wan moon is setting behind the white wave,
And time is setting with me, oh !

Apart from the respects in which Burns is the inheritor and perfecter of the vernacular traditions, and apart from his contact, active or passive, with the English poets of his time, there is much in his poetry which is thoroughly his own. It does not lie mainly in his thinking, robust and shrewd though that is. We perceive in his work no great individual attitude toward life and society such as we are impelled to perceive in the work of Goethe; we find no message in it like the message of Browning. What he does is to bring before us characters, situations, moods, images; that belong to the permanent and elemental in our nature. These are presented with a sympathy so living, a tenderness so poignant, a humor so arch and so sly, that they become a part of our experience in the most delightful and exhilarating fashion. Part of the function of poetry is to prevent us from becoming sluggish in our contemplation of life by making us feel it fresh, vivid, pulsing; and this Burns notably ac-

complishes. Coleridge's image of wetting the pebble to bring out its color and brilliance is peculiarly apt in the case of Burns; for it was the common if not the commonplace that he dealt with, and his workmanship made it sparkle like a jewel.

In the long run the value of an author depends on two factors, the nature of his insight and his power of expression. Burns's insight into his own nature was deep and on the whole just, and that nature was itself rich enough to teach him much. He found there the great struggle between impulse and will—fiery, surging impulse and a stubborn will. This experience, illuminated by a lively imagination, gave him a sympathetic understanding of extraordinary range, extending from the domestic troubles of the royal family and the perplexities of the prime minister to the precarious adventures of a louse. His insight into external nature blended the weather wisdom of the ploughman with the poet's sensitiveness to the harmony or discord of wind and sky with the moods of humanity.

For the expression of all this he had an instrument that did not reach, it is true, to the great tragic tones of Shakespeare nor to the deli-

cate and filmy subtleties of Shelley. But he could utter pathos almost intolerably piercing; and overwhelming remorse; gaiety as fresh and inspiriting as the song of a lark; roistering mirth; keen irony; and a thousand phases of passion. This he did in a verse of amazing variety—sometimes tender and caressing; sometimes rushing like a torrent.

Finally, it must be insisted again, in that aspect in which he is most nearly supreme, the writing of songs, he is musician as well as poet. Though he made no tunes, he saved hundreds; saved them not merely for the antiquary and the connoisseur but for the great mass of lovers of sweet and simple melody; saved them by marrying them to fit and immortal words. It is for this most of all that Scotland and the world love Burns.

THE END

INDEX

INDEX

- A Man's a Man for a' That*, quoted 158, 317.
A Red, Red Rose, 101, quoted 102.
Address to the Deil, 38, 86, 281, quoted 282.
Address to the Unco Guid, 38, quoted 176, 189.
Adventures of Telemachus, 17.
Ae Fond Kiss, quoted 56-57, 75, 103.
Æneid (Douglas's), 268.
Afton Water, quoted 116.
 Ainslie, Robert, 50.
 Alloway, 4 ff.
 Animals, Burns's feeling for, 270, 271.
 Armour, James, 35, 37-39.
 Armour, Jean, 35-39, 50, 55, 93, 110, 122, 172.
 Arnold, Matthew, 206, 237.
Auld Lang Syne, 98, quoted 100.
 Auld Lights, 179, 180, 184, 188.
Auld Rob Morris, 115, quoted 121.

 Bachelor's Club, 22.
Bannocks o' Barley, quoted 165.
Bard's Epitaph, A, 294, quoted 308.
 Beattie, 86.
 Beethoven, 95.
 Begbie, Ellison, 22-23, 27, 110.
Bessy and Her Spinnin'-Wheel, quoted 145.
 Biography, Official, 68.
 Blacklock, Doctor, 39.
 Blair, Doctor, 45, 86.
 Blair Athole, 51.
 Boar's Head Tavern, 240.
Bonnie Lesley, 115, quoted 118.
Braw Braw Lads, quoted 140.
 Brow-on-Solway, 67.
 Browning, 320.
 Burnes, William, 3-8.
 Burns, Agnes (Brown), 4, 8.
 Burns, Gilbert, 5-6, 15, 31, 59, 90.
 Burns, Robert, his career: autobiographical letter, 1-2;
 parentage and early life, 3-23; schooling, 5-8, 15, 17;
 reading, 6-8, 18-19; study of French, 16; folk-lore,

- 18; overwork, 19; first song, 20; flax-dressing, 23; early love-affairs, 22, 27; Mossiel, 31-44; Elizabeth Paton, 32-35; Jean Armour, 35-36; Mary Campbell (Highland Mary), 36-37; West Indian project, 37-39; Elizabeth Miller, 37; Kilmarnock edition, 37-38; disciplined by the church, 38-39; Edinburgh, 44-56; early reviews, 46; Edinburgh edition, 46-50; southern tour, 50; Highland tours, 50-51; Mrs. McLehose, 52-58; marriage, 55; Ellisland, 58-62; Excise, 61-65; Dumfries, 62-68; politics, 63-65; work for Johnson and Thomson, 65-66, 91-98; whisky, 66-67, 313; illness and death, 66-67.
- Burns and music, 9 ff.
- Burns's method of composition, 87, 92, 111-112.
- Burns's stanza, 80.
- Ca' the Yowes*, quoted 115.
- Campbell, Mary, 36-37, 76, 112. See *Highland Mary*.
- Canterbury Tales*, 254.
- Chalmers, Margaret, 110.
- Charlie He's My Darling*, quoted 168.
- Chaucer, 254.
- Chloris (Jean Lorimer), 110, 112.
- Choice Collection* (Watson's), 81.
- Clarinda (Mrs. McLehose), 52-58.
- Clarinda*, quoted 58, 75, 109.
- Cockburn, Mrs., 82.
- Coleridge, 321.
- Come Boat Me O'er to Charlie*, quoted 163.
- Comin' through the Rye*, quoted 154.
- Complete Letter-Writer*, 6.
- Contented wi' Little*, quoted 126.
- Conviviality, 66, 313.
- Corn Rigs*, 75.
- Cowper, 267, 317.
- Crabbe, 267.
- Craigieburn-wood*, 111.
- Creech, 45, 50, 52.
- Currie, Doctor, 68.
- Dalrymple, James, 44.
- Dalrymple School, 15.
- Davidson, Betty, 18.
- Death and Doctor Hornbook*, quoted 287.
- Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie*, 80, 82.
- Dedication to Gavin Hamilton*, 185-186.
- Descriptive poetry, 206 ff., 264 ff.

Dick, J. C., 91-92, note.
 Dodsley, Robert, 103.
 Douglas, Gavin, 268.
 Dramatic lyrics, 128 ff.
 Drummond of Hawthornden, 72.
 Dumfries, 50, 62-68.
 Dunbar, William, 81, 241, 316.
Duncan Davison, quoted 153.
Duncan Gray, quoted 152.
 Dunlop, Mrs. 110.

Edinburgh, Burns in, 44-56.
Edinburgh Magazine, 46.
 Elegies, 294 ff.
Elegy on Capt. Matthew Henderson, quoted 298.
 Ellisland, 58-62.
 English poems of Burns, 73 ff.
 Epigrams, 204, 205.
Epistle to a Young Friend, 199, quoted 200.
Epistle to Davie, 79, quoted 193, 267.
Epistle to James Smith, 190, 191.
Epistle to John Goldie, 179.
Epistle to John Rankine, 33.
Epistle to McMath, 181.
Epistle to William Simpson, 270.
 Epistles, 38, 190 ff.
 Epitaphs, 204, 205.
 Erskine, Hon. Henry, 45.
 Excise service, 59, 61-65.

Farmer's Ingle, 84.
 Ferguson, Dr. Adam, 46.
 Fergusson, Robert, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 316.
 Fisher, William, 173.
 Flax-dressing experiment, 23.
 Flint, Christina, 93.
For the Sake o' Somebody, quoted 136.
 Freemasons, 46.
 French Revolution, 63-64.
From thee, Eliza, I must go, 37.

Gaelic, 69.
 Gibson, Nancy, 239.
 Glencairn, Lord, 45, 49.
 Glenriddel Manuscript, 60.
Go Fetch to me a Pint o' Wine, quoted 88.
 Goethe, 320.
 Goldsmith, 86.

- Gordon, Duchess of, 45, 48.
 Graham of Fintry, 64.
 Gray, 86.
Green Grow the Rashes, quoted 123.
 Grose, Captain, 253.

Had I the Wyte?, quoted 148.
Halloween, 38, 208, quoted 209, 217, 218, 228, 270, 282.
 Hamilton, Gavin, 38, 172, 185.
 Hamilton of Gilbertfield, 81, 82.
Handsome Nell: quoted 20; criticized by Burns, 21-22, 103.
Happy Beggars, 238.
 Haydn, 95.
 Henderson, Captain Matthew, 294.
 Henryson, Robert, 78, 81, 272, 316.
 Heroic couplet in Burns, 268, 269.
Highland Mary, quoted 113-116.
 Highland Mary, 36-37, 76, 110.
History of the Bible, 6.
 Hogg, James, 162.
Holy Willie's Prayer, 38, quoted 173.
How Lang and Dreary, quoted 138.
Humble Petition of Bruar Water, 51.
 Hume, David, 44.

I Gaed a Waefu' Gate, quoted 117.
I Hae a Wife, quoted 59, 103.
I Hae Been at Crookieden, quoted 167.
I'm Oure Young to Marry Yet, quoted 143.
 Independence, Scottish love of, 311.
 Irvine, 23.
It Was a' for our Rightfu' King, quoted 162.

 Jacobite Songs, 161 ff.
 Jacobitism, 63.
John Anderson, my Jo, 145, quoted 146.
 Johnson, James, 65, 91, 94, 97, 98, 316.

Kenmure's On and Awa, quoted 165.
 Kilmarnock Edition, 37-39.
 Kilpatrick, Nelly, 20, 22, 110.
 Kirk of Scotland, Opposition to, 171.
 Kirkoswald, 17, 254.
Kirkyard Eclogues, 84.
 Knox, John, 71.
 Kozeluch, 95.

- La Fontaine, 272.
Laddie Lie Near Me, 92.
Lament for the Earl of Glencairn, 49.
 Language of Burns, 69 ff.
Lassie wi' the Lint-white Locks, quoted 119.
Last Dying Words of Bonny Heck, 82.
Last May a Braw Wooer, quoted 135.
Last Speech of a Wretched Miser, 83.
Leith Races, 84.
 Lewars, Jessie, 110, 122.
 Lindsay, Sir David, 71.
 Lindsay, Lady Anne, 82.
 Lochlea, 5 ff.
London Monthly Review, 46.
 Lorimer, Jean (Chloris), 110, 111.
Lounger, The, 46.
 Lowland Scots, 69 ff.
Lucky Spence's Last Advice, 82.

 Mackenzie, Henry, 19, 45, 46, 86.
Macpherson's Farewell, quoted 150.
 McGill, Doctor, 186.
 McLehose, Mrs., 52-58.
Mary Morison, quoted 28.
 Mauchline, 31, 50.
Merry Beggars, 238.
 Miller, Elizabeth, 37.
 Milton, 85.
Montgomerie's Peggy, quoted 120.
 Montgomery, Alexander, 79, 316.
 Moore, Dr. John: 5; letter to, 1-2, 18, 83.
 Mossgiel, 31-44.
 Mount Oliphant, 4-5.
 Murdoch, John, 5, 15-17, 90-91.
 Murray, Sir William, 51.
 Muse, jocular treatment of his, 203 ff.
 Music, Burns's knowledge of, 90 ff.
 Music and song, 169-170, 322.
My Father was a Farmer, quoted 126.
My Heart's in the Highlands, quoted 140.
My Love She's but a Lassie Yet, 141, quoted 144.
My Luve is Like a Red, Red Rose, 101, quoted 102.
My Nannie's Awa, quoted 57-58, 75, 103, 266.
My Nannie O, quoted 29-30, 103.
My Wife's a Winsome Wee Thing, quoted 108.

 Nairne, Lady, 162.
 Nature in Burns, 318.
 New Lights, 179, 188.
 Nicol, William, 50, 52.

O, For Ane an' Twenty, Tam! quoted 129.
O Merry Hae I Been, quoted 148.
O This is No my Ain Lassie, quoted 107.
O, Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast, 122, quoted 123.
Of a' the Airs, quoted 106.
On a Scotch Bard, Gone to the West Indies, quoted, 42-44.
On Seeing a Wounded Hare, 86.
Open the Door to me, O! quoted 137.

Park, Anne, 110.
 Paton, Elizabeth, 32.
 Peasant characteristics of Burns, 311, 312.
 Percy, Bishop, 81.
Planestanes and Causey, 84.
 Pleyel, 95.
 Politics, 63-65.
Poor Mailie's Elegy, quoted 26-27.
Poortith Cauld, 106, quoted 107.
 Poosie Nansie, 239.
 Pope, 86, 269.
Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ, 186.
Prayer in the Prospect of Death, quoted 32.

Ramsay, Allan, 79, 81, 82, 83, 84, 99, 103, 238, 316.
 Ramsay of Ochertyre, 51.
 Realism, 267.
 Reformation, influence of, 95 ff.
Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, 81.
 Richmond, 44.
 Riddel, Col. Robert, 60.

Satires and Epistles, 171 ff.
 Scenery in Burns, 265 ff.
Scotch Drink, 38, 84, 294, quoted 301.
Scots Musical Museum, 65, 95, 97.
Scots, Wha Hae, quoted 160.
 Scott, Alexander, 79.
 Scott, Sir Walter, 44, 46-48, 161-162.
 Scottish Dialect, 69 ff.
 Scottish Folk-song, 96 ff.
 Scottish Literature, 78 ff.
 Scottish Song, 90 ff.
 Sea in Scottish poetry, 264-265.
 Seasons, 318.
Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs, 95.
 Sempills, 79, 80, 294, 316.
 Shaftesbury, 193.
 Shakespeare, 85, 321.

- Shelley, 322.
 Shenstone, 86.
 Sibbald, James, 46.
Simmer's a Pleasant Time, quoted 131.
 Smith, Adam, 44.
 Sterne, 86, 270.
 Stewart, Dugald, 45.
 Stirling, Alexander, Earl of, 72.
 Stuart-Menteath, Sir James, 93.

Tam Glen, quoted 133.
Tam o' Shanter, 253-257, quoted 257, 266, 268, 282.
Tam Samson's Elegy, quoted 294.
Tea Table Miscellany, 81, 99.
The Auld Farmer's New-Year Morning Salutation, quoted 278.
The Banks of Helicon, 79.
The Blue-eyed Lassie, quoted 117.
The Bonnie Lad that's Far Awa, quoted 139.
The Brigs of Ayr, 267.
The Cherry and the Slae, 79.
The Cotter's Saturday Night, quoted 8-15, 38, 74, 84, 190, criticized 207 ff., 219, 266.
The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie, quoted 23-25.
The Deil's Awa wi' th' Exciseman, quoted 154.
The Deuk's Dang o'er my Daddie, quoted 155.
The Gazetteer, 64.
The Gentle Shepherd, 82.
The Gloomy Night, quoted 40-41, 103.
The Highland Balou, 150, quoted 151.
The Highland Laddie, quoted 164.
The Holy Fair, 38, 84, 227, quoted 228.
The Jolly Beggars, 38, 77, 238-241, quoted 241, 266.
The Kirk's Alarm, 186, 187.
The Lass of Cessnock Banks, 23.
The Lea-Rig, quoted 120.
The Man of Feeling, 86.
The Ordination, 184, 185.
The Piper of Kilbarchan, 79.
The Poet's Welcome to his Love-begotten Daughter, quoted 33-35.
The Rantin' Dog the Daddie o't, quoted 134.
The Rigs o' Barley, quoted 30, 103.
The Twa Dogs, 4, 38, 84, quoted 219.
The Twa Herds, 180.
The Vision, 38.
The Weary Pund o' Tow, quoted 147.
There'll Never be Peace, quoted 166.

- There was a Lad*, quoted 125.
 Thomson, George, 65, 88, 91, 92, 95, 98, 169, 316.
 Thomson, James, 86, 318.
To a Haggis, 294, quoted 306.
To a Louse, 38, quoted 274.
To a Mountain Daisy, 38, 86, 190, quoted 276.
To a Mouse, 38, 86, 190, quoted 272.
To Daunton Me, quoted 142.
To Mary in Heaven, 76, quoted 114.
To the Deil, 38, 86, 281, quoted 282.
To the Guidwife of Wauchope House, 316.
To the Rev. John McMath, quoted 181.
To the Unco Guid, 38, quoted 176, 189.

Wallace, History of Sir William, 19.
Wandering Willie, quoted 138.
 Watson, James, 81.
 West Indies, 37-39.
Wha is that at my Bower Door?, quoted 156.
What Can a Young Lassie, quoted 142.
Whistle and I'll Come to Thee, my Lad, 75, quoted 132.
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary, 37, quoted 40, 103.
Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut, 237, quoted 238.
Willie's Wife, quoted 156.
 Wilson, John (Dr. Hornbook), 287.
Winter, a Dirge, 266.
Winter Night, A, 271.
 Women, Burns and, 314, 315.
 Wordsworth, 318, 319.

Ye Banks and Braes, quoted 130, 131.
Yestreen I had a Pint o' Wine, quoted 104-105, 110.
 Young, Dr., 86.

